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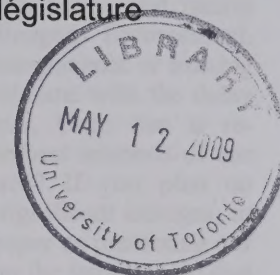
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Journal des débats (Hansard)



Thursday 7 May 2009

Jeudi 7 mai 2009

Speaker
Honourable Steve Peters

Président
L'honorable Steve Peters

Clerk
Deborah Deller

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Deborah Deller

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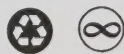
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Hansard Reporting and Interpretation Services
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 7 May 2009

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 7 mai 2009

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Good morning. Please remain standing for the Lord's Prayer, followed by a moment of silence for inner thought and personal reflection.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

FAMILY STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 2009

LOI DE 2009 MODIFIANT DES LOIS EN CE QUI CONCERNE LE DROIT DE LA FAMILLE

Resuming the debate adjourned on May 6, 2009, on the motion for third reading of Bill 133, An Act to amend various Acts in relation to certain family law matters and to repeal the Domestic Violence Protection Act, 2000 / *Projet de loi 133, Loi modifiant diverses lois en ce qui concerne des questions de droit de la famille et abrogeant la Loi de 2000 sur la protection contre la violence familiale.*

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Further debate?

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: I rise today to speak to Bill 133, the Family Statute Law Amendment Act, 2009. Unfortunately, it's yet another missed opportunity to get something right, and especially to get something right for our children.

As my caucus colleague from Simcoe North so clearly illustrated yesterday, you know you have a problem when the Family Court judges, in a very rare act, have come out in writing against this bill. These are the people this province has put in place to uphold the law of the land. Not only that, but they see the ramifications of missed opportunities in front of them in court every single day. We can't afford to get these issues wrong, especially when we have an opportunity to fix them. It's our duty as legislators to create balanced legislation that will have a meaningful impact on the lives of Ontarians, vulnerable Ontarians.

In the case of Bill 133, the intent is to offer protection to these vulnerable citizens, and we have an obligation to get this duty right. The Liberal government has once again chosen to play partisan politics and shot down key amendments without any comment, I might say—they just voted against them—that would have offered children and youth the protection that they deserve. Call it

what you will. The bottom line is, Bill 133 is a feel-good piece for the Liberal members only, and we do not share this enthusiasm.

This is just a first step, but once again, the devil is in the details. I would like to know how this will be enforced. We also need to ensure that the people we are trying to protect have access to the courts. We have a significant backlog in our court system today, and family courts are one of the most challenged. Enforcement, training and funding are all vital components of making this legislation work. There are problems with the delay throughout Ontario's justice system. Until that is resolved, how can we ensure that the best interests of our children are immediately addressed? If you plan on hurrying this bill through without significant changes, in the effort to get your name in the paper as protecting our children, you are only going to harm the very people that you've set out to try to help in the first place.

There are serious concerns that this legislation has repealed the Domestic Violence Protection Act, 2000, which could have provided victims of abuse the opportunity to apply for an emergency intervention order. I'm going to remind my Liberal colleagues about a few simple facts.

First of all, we're all aware that 64% of female homicide victims are killed by their current or past partners. Eighty-seven per cent of sexual offenders are actually known to their victims. In Canada, four out of five people—four out of five people—murdered by their spouses are women murdered by men. Over the last five years, it is documented that 1.2 million Canadians were victims of domestic violence.

As a mother and a grandmother, when I read these statistics I am very, very upset. It appalls me. These numbers are much too high, and I am proud that my caucus colleague from Durham took action to address some of these issues in his bill, the Lori Dupont Act. Lori might be alive today if the ability to secure an emergency intervention order had existed at the time. Why on earth would this government try to undo a necessary tool in preventing deaths from domestic violence? We have the opportunity now to give vulnerable people immediate access to court orders that would safeguard their lives and the lives of their loved ones. We can give vulnerable people immediate access to court orders. As well, applications for emergency intervention orders, as described in Bill 10, are intended to be available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. That's access to justice. That's what a democratic society has. That should be the focus of this legislation.

Ten years ago, Glen and Brenda Copithorn lost their daughter Jennifer in a tragic accident outside her workplace in Bowmanville. Her boyfriend was charged with first-degree murder. In 1999, the court of Ontario held an inquest into the murder of Arlene May by her boyfriend, Randy Iles. Arlene May was murdered in March 1996 by her former boyfriend, who then killed himself. Arlene's murder followed months of abuse, threats and harassment, which she reported to police on numerous occasions. At the time of the murder-suicide, her former boyfriend had been charged with several offences. They were against Arlene, and he was free on bail, and that prohibited him from having any contact with her.

Yet another familiar name: Gillian Hadley. Gillian was murdered in June 2000 by her husband, Ralph Hadley, from whom she was separated. He had assaulted her and her disabled child and had criminal charges pending against him. He had been charged with criminal harassment after stalking her following their separation. He was under a restraining order at the time of that murder.

Again, Lori Dupont, from Amherstburg, applied for a restraining order in April 2005 against Dr. Marc Daniel, an anesthesiologist with whom she had had a relationship until it ended badly. But the man contested the order, and a court date to hear the case was set a month after her death. What good was that? She was killed at her workplace, Hotel-Dieu Grace Hospital, on November 12, 2005. She left a daughter, aged 11, and her parents, Barb and John Dupont.

We must pay tribute to the hard work in our communities on a day-to-day basis. But we cannot expect our community partners to continue to deal with the aftermath of these tragedies when we have the opportunity right here and right now to get it right. The prevention of domestic violence is also a matter of education, awareness and support for victims, but most especially access to justice.

When this issue went through second reading in the Legislature, my colleagues and I did have some concerns about Bill 133, but we were prepared to support it in principle, because of the fact that it is dealing with some very significant issues that remain outstanding in family law, including child custody applications, domestic violence and, of course, pension splitting. But regrettably, the flaws in Bill 133 became apparent as soon as the various presenters came before committee at the hearings.

0910

With respect to child custody and protection matters, we heard from numerous presenters that the amendments to the Children's Law Reform Act that were proposed by Bill 133 are unworkable. They place judges in an untenable position and may in fact work against the child's best interests in some cases. We heard from a number of experts on this issue, including individual family law practitioners, the Family Lawyers' Association and, most notably, a letter that was written to the committee by 12 Family Court judges. This is quite remarkable in itself. I've never heard of this happening in committee before, where the judges themselves have actually been in touch

directly with the committee. As my colleague read into the record, they discussed some of the specific concerns that they have and basically recommended that the fitness of an applicant for a custody application be reviewed by the Office of the Children's Lawyer. This is something that we believe is going to ensure that children are properly protected and that custody applications are only granted in the children's best interests. It's the children we're focusing on here.

The other point is that one wonders who was consulted in the course of drafting this Bill 133. Almost every person who presented indicated that they were concerned about the so-called protection measures—a point that was also expressed by the judges. Who did we talk to? With respect to our preferred choices and the amendments that we, in our caucus, have put forward, we would prefer to see the Office of the Children's Lawyer be prepared to do the investigations in this process and present a report to the judge. The additional amendments that we have proffered really relate to a second alternative, which is to deal with what we already have and try to make that stronger. Certainly, the preferred course would be to have the Office of the Children's Lawyer involved. I think we need to be reminded about the importance of having the Office of the Children's Lawyer involved.

Katelynn Sampson was going into grade 3 at Parkdale public school. She had those chubby cheeks, if you remember her from the newscasts, and a beautiful smile. Around 2:30 on Sunday morning, August 4, Donna Irving, Katelynn's guardian, reported to 911 operators that seven-year-old Katelynn was choking on food. Well, when the police arrived at the apartment, they found Katelynn without any vital signs and pronounced her dead. After observing signs of obvious trauma to much of Katelynn's body, responding officers called homicide investigators. Donna Irving was arrested. She was charged with second-degree murder after EMS personnel arrived. Homicide Detective Sergeant Steve Ryan told reporters, "It is probably the worst thing I've seen in 20 years of policing—the worst. Katelynn clearly had not choked. It was quite clear. I can't give you the specifics," he said, "just that she was assaulted throughout her entire [little] body."

An autopsy the following two days took far longer than expected because of "the nature and severity" of her injuries. Katelynn appeared to have sustained the many and complicated injuries over a period of time before she was murdered. Ontario's Child and Youth Advocate, Irwin Elman, is calling for an inquest into Katelynn's death. Mr. Elman said, "I think that any time a child dies under these circumstances, we as a community, as a society, have something to learn." Even though an inquest would need to wait for resolution of the criminal case by the courts—which could take years, by the way—Elman said that the little girl's death should not "leave the public eye. We can't allow it to leave our memory." We also cannot be allowed to let this opportunity to prevent the tragedy that befell Katelynn to happen to yet other precious children.

With respect to this issue of domestic violence, I certainly do commend the government and the committee for taking on the issue of criminalizing the breach of restraining orders. That's a good thing. This is certainly commendable and something that is needed in order to prevent people being involved in domestic violence, predominantly women and children. However, the one thing we were not able to receive clarity on in the committee process was why: Why was it also necessary to repeal the Domestic Violence Protection Act? To our understanding, there are complementary provisions, and certainly not mutually exclusive. I would advocate retaining the Domestic Violence Protection Act, in addition to the other changes that are being made.

With respect to the issue of pension-splitting, well, we certainly heard a wide divergence in opinion between the actuaries who presented and the pension administrators. There really seems to be a concern about fairness for the non-pension-holding spouse and the concern that one shouldn't just use one pension valuation when determining net family property for equalization purposes. The suggestion was made by the actuaries—in fact, it was recommended by the Law Commission of Ontario—that two pension values be used: one for the vested amount, which would be included as the transfer amount, and the second one being the non-vested or contingent value, which would be used for the calculation of the net family property for equalization purposes. I would certainly suggest that we should make sure that the non-pension-holding spouse is fairly dealt with within the equalization process. Those are the types of amendments that we would prefer to see in this legislation.

The issues that are dealt with in our Family Court are not just legal ones; they have implications across all sectors, including our education system. In a study conducted by CAS in London-Middlesex between 1995 and 2001, it was found that children who were exposed to the abuse of women and were victims of abuse themselves were far more likely to be diagnosed with ADHD. What happens to these children who have no support at home and are also struggling at school? I believe that these are the children who are getting left behind, the ones who are falling through the cracks because they don't have anyone in their corner. We need resources dedicated to these at-risk children, not a plan to put new light bulbs in our schools.

The study concluded that healthy child development is affected by the quality of the parent-child relationship. When the parents are dealing with a myriad of social and highly emotional issues, the child is the one who suffers the most. We can never underestimate what a child observes and feels. It is the children who are deprived of what they need and what they deserve in order to grow up with the same opportunities as their classmates.

Our system let Katelynn Sampson down miserably. Now it's our duty to stand up for Katelynn and those for whom we can try to prevent the same kind of incident. It is our duty to stand for these precious children who are vulnerable to abuse at the hands of people that they look

to for protection and try to trust. We must not fail them. There is simply too much at stake here.

If there was ever a time to set our partisan politics aside, it is for Bill 133. So I ask the minister and I ask the whole team to take another look. Take another look at this amendment and put forward ideas that make the right decision here, because it's a lost opportunity if we don't.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Chudleigh): Questions and comments?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I just wanted to thank the member for her very eloquent comments about the shortcomings of this bill. The reality that we face—and one that we faced yesterday afternoon when we had the presentations by the member from Welland and Mr. Dunlop—is that this bill, for all the good intentions that I have no doubt existed on the part of those who were assigned to write it and those who shepherded it politically, will not prevent the sorts of tragic, horrible deaths that children will continue to face in a situation where there is not adequate provision for their protection, where there is not adequate provision for the sustaining of families and where there is not adequate provision for a system to review the state of children in the hands of the guardians into which their lives and fates are entrusted. This bill will not correct that.

0920

The member went through the failings in the bill and the failings in the process of deciding this bill. This bill should have been reshaped by the commentary of many of those who came before the committee. In particular—I will refer to this in my remarks—it should have been reshaped by the commentary of the judges, who came to say, "What you have given us will not work. What we have is already fragile, and the outcome will not be good for those children of this province who will, in the end, have their lives—their fates—determined by the family law courts."

I appreciate the member standing up and going into detail about the failings of the process on the bill itself. I ask, because I know that time is brief, that the government, in its next step with this bill, which will inevitably pass, actually take a look at the larger picture and try to ensure that the loss of life that comes about because of this failing system is in some way substantially reduced.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Chudleigh): Questions and comments?

Mr. David Zimmer: I just want to reply to two issues that have come up in the member from Burlington's comments.

First of all, on the issue of pension reform, we have heard from experts across the field: the family law bar, the litigants themselves who have been involved in the process and the Law Commission of Ontario. There is a sense that one of the issues that has been responsible for delay in the resolution of these family court matters is the husband and wife—partners—getting involved in a very complicated technical dispute about the valuation of pensions. We have heard that the parties, more often than not, have to engage not only the lawyer representing

them in the family law matter but a lawyer who has a special expertise in pensions—a pension lawyer. The pension lawyer, in turn, then finds it necessary to engage accountants and actuaries. This drives up the cost of resolution of these issues around division of the pension.

This law has a section on the valuation of pensions. It's a very clear, crisp direction about how to value the pension, who gets what portion of the pension and when. The testimony we heard at the hearings was that this process of clarifying, of giving clear direction on when and how to divide a pension, is going to do two things: It's going to speed up the proceedings and it's going to make them a lot cheaper. This is good.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Chudleigh): Further questions and comments?

The member for Burlington for a two-minute wrap-up.

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: I want to thank the member from Toronto–Danforth and the member from Willowdale.

I get it; I understand that this is a balancing act and that there are a lot of things that need to be satisfied. This is extremely complicated, and we're talking about people's lives at the worst time in their life, at a time when some of them have been through violent behaviour within their homes. Some of them have been through the ultimate violent behaviour, and members of their family have been murdered. I understand that; I get it.

But do you know what I don't understand? I don't understand why we have a committee hearing and, in the face of good advice from people who deal with this every single day—Family Court judges, the people themselves who have been through the violent acts and are telling you they're bleeding of their own experiences—we can't understand that and be able to weave it into amendments that really make a difference to people's lives and people's safety.

After hearing from these folks who have suffered—and some of them have, as I say, gone through murders in their families—we're putting emphasis on pension-splitting. What is this about? That's the predominant message from the Liberal side: "We have heard about pension-splitting." Yes, it's part of the act, and it is a component that's important to have straightened out in some way, but my God, we're talking about people being murdered. Where's that part of this? What about the protection and the safety and the peace of mind for the people? What about reducing the risk of more murders of vulnerable children? Let's think about this, folks, and let's do the right thing.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Chudleigh): Further debate?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I appreciate the opportunity, Speaker, as you would well know, and as other members of the Legislature would know, this is not my area of expertise. I haven't spent a lot of time in my life sorting through legal issues, court issues, family law issues. I've had an opportunity, in the course of this debate, to listen to a few speakers talk about the issue before us. I had a chance to listen to the member from Welland yesterday, I

had a chance to listen to my colleague Mr. Dunlop, and I had a chance to read through, in its entirety, the letter to the committee that was considering this act written by a number of sitting judges who deal with family law. For those who are watching today who have followed this bill and are not familiar with the law, not familiar with the legal process and how matters are argued and how, in theory, we sort out what's real and what's not real, it's a bit sobering, actually, to come into the process and get the opinion of those who are actually charged with trying to ensure that children are properly protected, so that children, be they two, four, eight or 10, are seen to have their lives and their futures protected by the world of those in their adult years who properly, correctly, ethically have responsibility for them.

It was pretty clear to me on reading the letter from the judges, it was pretty clear to me in talking to the member from Welland, pretty clear in listening to the member from Burlington, that we have a system here that will continue to fail and will continue to fail children. It will doom more children either to lives that are extraordinarily unpleasant, dreary or painful, or to death. You can't deal with the problems that we have before us in a small way because the problems are very far-reaching.

I want to say that the problems reach far beyond the courts, and they do. If families don't have adequate incomes, the internal pressures that creates are extraordinary. They cause anger, and they can cause violence, drug addiction and mental illness, all of which erode the basis for the families, may pull those families apart, may blow them apart, putting children in a position where they have to be assigned a guardian. If, when those conditions blow a family apart and there's conflict over the custody of a child, the system that's in place is not adequate to actually represent the interests of the child and not adequate to actually put the facts before someone who can make a considered judgment, then that child's life, both in terms of living and dying and in terms of how they will proceed in the future, is thrown in the balance.

I was trying to think of a way of expressing it that would be clearer. I'm not sure if this will be clear enough, but if you throw a whole bunch of children into the deep end of a swimming pool every day and you have a few lifeguards, some of the kids will struggle to the edge of the pool and pull themselves out, some will be saved by the lifeguards and some will fall to the bottom. If you do that every day, you will continue to have the survivors, you will continue to have those who are saved and you will continue to have those who will drown.

0930

That, unfortunately, is the situation that we are in. We don't have a situation that stops the kids from being thrown right off into the deep end. Poverty, lack of programs for mental illness, lack of programs for addiction, lack of programs to stop violence and sexism: All those things set the pre-conditions for blowing families apart and throwing children deep into the water. You have to deal with those things. That's not really being dealt with—no, I shouldn't have said "not really"; that is not being dealt with.

So we fall back on the next line of defence, which should be a properly functioning system of custodianship for children and a properly functioning system of determining who should be looking after children, under what conditions they will be looked after and how those custodians will be supervised, as has been said in the course of the hearings on this act.

A presentation was made by 12 sitting judges in the family court system. I recognized only one name on that list, a judge whom I had met in her former life as a lawyer, who was a very balanced, sane, compassionate person who, I think, would probably be doing the best she could and frankly would not be a person who would commonly write in to legislation, just because judges generally are not meant to write legislation. I would say that she and the others were wise to point out to us, the legislators, that there are substantial problems that are not going to be dealt with by this legislation and there are substantial problems in the world beyond legislation that, if not dealt with, will continue to result in the loss of life and the loss of futures for many, many children.

For those who are watching, you should know that their letter is probably available on the public record, but I want to read some of what they had to say and comment on it, as was done by Mr. Garfield Dunlop yesterday. I'm not going to read their whole thing, but there were a few points they made that really illustrated the fundamental weaknesses that we face here. The judges write:

"We reject the view, advanced by some, that our courts are so over loaded that judges are too busy to address this critical issue in each case. This is not our experience. However, in a court system which is critically underpopulated by lawyers, the task of judges becomes more difficult.

"Today Family Court judges in Ontario are expected to make crucial legal decisions affecting the well-being of children in an environment which has been degraded by the disappearance of family lawyers. This problem is likely most acute in the provincial family courts, where parties of modest means come to seek a solution of their urgent family problems. These litigants cannot afford lawyers and cannot qualify for legal aid. They cannot afford child psychologists, custody assessors, parenting coordinators and private mediators."

In other words, the vast bulk of the population who are working at jobs in retail or service, perhaps grandparents on retirement income, are people who come to court with no professional backup, trying to present evidence before a judge in a situation which may or may not be contested, and a judge trying to figure out what is real and what is not real.

For those who have ever gone through any legal proceedings—and I had an opportunity when I was a property manager in a life a long time ago. For those who are not schooled as lawyers, when you first present your story to a lawyer, let me tell you that a large part of what you present doesn't really reflect on the facts and the matters that are relevant to a judge. Because when you talk, you talk about all the things that are important to

you emotionally, as well as intellectually; what's on your mind in a variety of ways. Legally there's a far narrower field of facts and matters that are of consequence to a judge and the decisions that are made by a judge. For those of us who are unschooled in the law, presenting an argument to a judge is very different from presenting an argument to a friend. You can have a huge negative impact on your own interests if you don't present an argument properly. That is why there is a whole profession of people whose job it is to go out, sort through statements that are made, pull out the facts that are of consequence, look for facts in the arguments of others and present them to a judge in a coherent way so that hopefully—hopefully—an intelligent decision is made about the matter before us.

It's quite correct, what the judges say. You talk to lawyers in this city who have done work on legal aid—the money is very scanty, there's no evidence of any change of that, and thus you have a situation where very few people are assisted in what are fundamental decisions about the fate of their families and their children. The judges are saying, "You can have this act, you can have us do a lot more, but we're telling you right now that if you don't have the lawyers and you don't provide access for the families to qualified professionals who can assess issues around psychology and around the state of the family, then you are not going to get good decisions," and the judges are right. So no matter what good intent there may have been with the law—there may have been good intent—unless that problem is dealt with, even an excellent law is going to find itself badly applied because there aren't the supports and the frameworks necessary to deliver justice in a court setting. That is a fundamental flaw with the situation before us.

The judges go on to say, "Even if they"—referring to those who come, the mothers and fathers, those who are looking after the children who have been cast into chaos by a family coming apart—"did have access to these resources, the child psychologists, the custody assessors, the litigants in our courts may have the kind of problem that cannot be resolved through mediation and parent information programs. They may be isolated for cultural or language reasons. Their partner may have substance abuse or mental health issues. There may be violence in the home. These litigants need to go to court because they need a court order to protect themselves and their children, and they have the right and even the obligation to do so to protect their children's best interests." Again the judges are saying that there's a huge issue of supports, social services, that have to be out there if you're actually going to protect these families and these children. This act is not going to address that. I can assure anyone who is watching or listening today, and I can assure you, Speaker, that the budget of this government that is going to come forward is not going to address this either.

The judges go on to talk about duty counsel, because in many, many cases, people are not going to be in a position to have someone represent them, and duty counsel will not be there.

Speaker, do we have a quorum?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Chudleigh): Is there a quorum present?

The Acting Clerk-at-the-Table (Katch Kotch): A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Chudleigh): Call in the members.

The Acting Speaker ordered the bells rung.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Lisa Freedman): A quorum is now present, Speaker.

0940

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Chudleigh): Thank you. The member for Toronto—Danforth may continue.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: The judges talking about the legal services available to those who come before the court note that those who don't qualify for legal aid may qualify for duty counsel. They say that duty counsel are people who "have inadequate time to interview" those who come before the court and "to ensure ... their cases can be presented properly to the court. Duty counsel do not assist in the preparation of motions and affidavits. Duty counsel do not represent parties at motions or trials. Pleadings are drafted by volunteer law students, or by self-represented parties, who have limited knowledge of the evidentiary requirements of relevance and reliability. Duty counsel do not maintain files. A party coming to court twice will likely see two different duty counsel. There is no continuity."

At every point, the Family Court judges have made it very clear that those who come before them are not adequately or properly represented, even in a situation where we are dealing with a simple mediation process. We're not dealing with matters of no consequence, and we're not dealing with some sort of specially modified world of law that doesn't have rules of evidence. We are dealing with law courts operating within the framework of law that demand presentation of evidence and arguments that are of substance. And yet those whose lives are dependent on the outcome of these decisions don't have representation and basically try to muddle through as best they can to get the results that may protect them and their children. The judges make it clear that the system that is in place does not protect families and does not protect children.

"The family law legal system," they go on to say, "is complex. Self-represented parties are at a tremendous disadvantage. They may not even speak English. These parties are not in court because they enjoy the experience." I have absolutely no doubt of that statement. "They are there because they have a legal problem which requires, and is capable of, a legal solution. They have little or no knowledge of the governing laws, how the legal system works, and what kind of evidence they need to prove their case. The challenge facing the judge who has to find the facts, and make the best decision in these circumstances, is immense. In other words, we understand the legislator's concerns because it is our concern."

Again, if this was the most wonderful legislation in the world and we had a system behind it that was so thread-

bare, so lacking in substance, so lacking in support for the families and the children whose lives depend on the outcome, even if it was the most wonderful bill in the world, it would not protect the people whose lives are dependent upon this system. It is not an excusable, it is not a pardonable, it is not an explainable situation. It is abhorrent. It is one that should be rejected—this system within which children are thrown into the deep end and those who can, save themselves; some are saved by the occasional intervention; and some fall to the bottom of the pool, not to be recovered.

They go on to talk about the lack of information presented to the courts because there isn't representation on both sides. They talk about the need for independent advice to the courts, and say that you can provide judges with tons of information, unprocessed and raw, and they will not be able to get through it and figure out—they, in their very narrow range of decision-making and assessment, need information that has been reviewed, condensed and brought forward. That will not be addressed in this act.

I have made the points I want to make. Children in this province and families in this province will continue to face profound problems. Children's futures will be lost, and children's lives will be lost; this act will not correct that. The issue has to be addressed on a much larger basis, and it is time for this government to do that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Chudleigh): Questions and comments?

Mr. David Zimmer: I want to respond to the two previous speakers, the NDP speaker and the Conservative speaker, who seem to be of the view that the legislation does not do enough to protect women from violence. Here is what the experts in the field say. These are the people who are on the front line on a day-to-day basis dealing with violence against women. It's important to consider what the experts think, not what the Conservative member from Burlington and the previous speaker from the NDP think.

Pamela Cross, who is a legal consultant for violence-against-women issues and an advocate, says: "Making restraining orders available to more women who live in an environment of violence is an important step forward in both preventing and responding to violence against women."

Here's what Heather McGregor, CEO of the YWCA—an expert dealing with it on a day-to-day basis, who provides emergency shelter to 547 women and their children each year who are fleeing violence—says: "This package of reforms will ensure that more of these women are able to keep themselves and their children safe" and live "lives free from violence." That's the opinion of someone who is dealing with this issue on a day-to-day basis.

Here is what Shahina Siddiqui, the executive director of the Islamic Social Services Association, says: "We welcome this announcement and support the government's commitment to ensuring the rights and safety of women and children in Ontario."

There are several other quotes from these people who are on the front lines on a day-to-day basis. They're ac-

tually dealing with these acts of violence. They think it's good legislation.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Chudleigh): Further questions and comments?

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to recognize some of the comments that were made by my colleague from Toronto–Danforth. First of all, he recognized that New Democrats want to protect women from violence, and they want to protect children and whole families from violence and hardship also. When a bill is before this House that attempts to do this, it is certainly something that is first greeted with enthusiasm. We believe in supporting strong and healthy families that work and live in strong and healthy communities. Any work that this legislation could do to achieve this goal is something that the NDP would support. Then he went into some of the details of what's in the bill and details of what is not in the bill, that would fail to do what it sets out to do; that is, to protect women from violence and keep children who are in harm's way from getting hurt in sometimes messy processes.

He focused a little bit on the fact that the Domestic Violence Protection Act, 2000, is being repealed with this act. While some will tell you that it was not a perfect bill, it certainly was put into place to do exactly what it wanted to do: to protect people from domestic violence. It's one thing to have a bill put forward in this House; it's something else to see how it will play out. I would say that my colleague from Toronto–Danforth explained that clearly in his presentation this morning.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Chudleigh): Further questions and comments?

Interjection.

Mr. Mike Colle: You can't do it twice.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Chudleigh): You can't do it twice, sir.

Further questions and comments?

Seeing none, is there further debate?

Mr. Mike Colle: Doesn't he have a wrap-up?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Chudleigh): Oh, would you like a two-minute response?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Yes. Why not?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Chudleigh): Why not? Good idea.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I can see that my fellow legislators would have been deeply disappointed if I had not responded—deeply, deeply.

I want to speak very briefly to the comments of the member from Willowdale, who quoted a number of people who work in the field, protecting women against violence.

I'd like to say to you, Speaker, and to the member from Willowdale that it is very clear from reading what has been presented to us that this act, even if it was wonderfully written, will not do what we, as individuals in this House, want done in a context in which the social and legal services are not there to protect the interests of women and children. It will not stem the violence that goes on. There are far larger social steps that have to be

taken. There are substantial steps that have to be taken in the administration of law and the support of families involved in the legal process.

Sometimes legislation can be a good thing, and sometimes legislation can simply be wallpaper. It can be a nice coating on the face of a structure that itself is not sound and will not hold up a building.

Whether this legislation is good or bad—others have talked in far more detail about the precise content of the legislation—the situation in which women, children and families find themselves in this province is often one of misery, and until you address the larger issues, the legislation will be largely irrelevant.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Chudleigh): Is there further debate?

Mr. Bentley has moved third reading of Bill 133. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

I heard a no.

All those in favour will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

I believe the ayes have it.

This vote will be deferred until after question period.

Third reading vote deferred.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Chudleigh): Orders of the day.

Hon. John Wilkinson: The government has no further business this morning until question period.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Chudleigh): This House stands recessed until question period at 10:30.

The House recessed from 0953 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: I would ask all to join me in welcoming the staff and students from G.L. Roberts Collegiate and Vocational Institute in my riding. They'll be arriving very shortly and very much enjoying question period.

Hon. Margaret R. Best: Today it's certainly a great pleasure for me to welcome to the Legislature two of our summer students, Monique Habib from Brock University and Roberto Walcott from Wilfrid Laurier University.

Mrs. Carol Mitchell: It's my pleasure to introduce Ross Davies, who is attending question period today. He'll be very well-informed when he leaves here today.

Ms. Helena Jaczek: In the west members' gallery we have Edwina McGroddy, executive director for the Ontario Society of Professional Engineers, and joining her shortly will be a constituent of mine, Angela Shama, the CEO of the same society.

Mr. David Zimmer: I'd like to welcome Cathy Bailey, the chair of the Certified Management Accountants of Ontario, and all of the other certified management accountants who are here today in the Legislature and throughout Queen's Park. There will be a reception in room 230 after question period. I urge all of you to attend.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): On behalf of the member from Kitchener-Conestoga and page Lindsay Eenkooren, we'd like to welcome, from the McQuarrie Enrichment Centre, Lindsay's grade 7 class and their teacher, Susan Watt, joining us in the public gallery today. Welcome.

A happy birthday to the Minister of Small Business and Consumer Services. Happy birthday, Mr. Takhar.

I'd like to welcome, from Aylmer in my riding of Elgin-Middlesex-London, Abe and Anita Harms. Abe is a tireless advocate for the Mennonite community and is seated in the Speaker's gallery. Abe, Anita, welcome to Queen's Park today.

Not to feel left out, I'd like all members to wish the honourable member from Halton, Mr. Chudleigh, a happy birthday today as well.

ORAL QUESTIONS

PROTECTION FOR WORKERS

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: My question is to the Minister of Labour, and it's regarding the Ruby Dhalla affair and his contention that he did absolutely nothing after hearing horror stories from two nannies about the treatment they received at the hands of Ms. Dhalla, a Liberal member of Parliament. Minister, that's your story, and even your Premier has difficulty buying it when he says there's "a perception issue" here. Your defence is apparently that you are totally incompetent and lacking in moral fibre, and the fact that a prominent Liberal was involved in the accusations had nothing to do with your lack of action. Are you sticking to that story today?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: In my round tables, I've heard many, many stories from women who were mistreated by unscrupulous agencies and employers. That is why we set up a dedicated 1-800 hotline for live-in caregivers: so that they can call and they can learn about their rights and how to file a complaint. It's why we set up a dedicated enforcement unit that's behind that 1-800 line, to be able to investigate those complaints. It's why we're moving forward with legislation that will, for the first time in this province, ban placement fees and further strengthen protections for vulnerable live-in caregivers. These people take care of our most precious resource—our children, our loved ones—and that is what we're doing: taking care of them.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: That's more stonewalling.

Minister, I trust you can appreciate that your negligence, your failure to act, raises serious questions about a deliberate cover-up, an attempt to keep allegations of—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd just ask the honourable member to withdraw that comment.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: My God. I will withdraw—an attempt to keep under wraps an abuse by a prominent member of the Liberal Party. It's difficult to

believe that alarm bells didn't go off when you heard Ms. Dhalla's name.

Minister, did you and the Minister of Education discuss this issue after the meeting? Is that when you decided to ignore the plight of these women?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: I thank the member for the question. The member should know full well himself that the last thing I would want to do is jeopardize an investigation. As an elected official, my involvement in a specific claim could do just that. These investigations are pursued by independent officials, and I think that is the best approach and the right way to move forward.

As Minister of Labour, I've been holding round tables to inform my ministry officials and myself of what is happening out there with this federal live-in caregiver program. We do hear about the exploitation and how this program is completely broken. This is the information that my officials are using as we put together our piece of legislation. But I would hope that that—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Final supplementary.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: As a minister of the crown, you have a special duty, and you've clearly failed that here, if not worse. You've failed these two women, either on the basis of incompetence or a deliberate effort to put this under wraps for a Liberal ally, and today you are stonewalling legitimate and valid questions about your performance as a minister.

I don't ask this lightly, having stepped aside myself: Will you step aside, support an investigation and do the right thing?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: After that particular round table, some of those live-in caregivers shared their stories with me that they would be meeting with Mr. Kenney the next evening. I urged them to share their stories so that he could understand how flawed this federal program is.

Allegations by several of the live-in caregivers have been made at meetings that I've attended. I repeatedly urged those live-in caregivers, those nannies, to call my ministry, to call the toll-free number, to call the hotline, where we have trained officials to be able to deal with their cases, to be able to provide them information. These are impartial professionals, officials, who are there to do that work. So I urge anybody who feels that they have been mistreated, unjustly treated, to call the 1-800 hotline and speak with ministry officials.

PROTECTION FOR WORKERS

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: Back to the Minister of Labour: This minister and his colleagues like to portray themselves as the defenders of the downtrodden, but we all know that actions mean more than words. In this case, the action was to protect the queen of mean, a Liberal ally, and give these victims, immigrant women who may have been victims of serious human rights abuses at her hands—what did you do? You gave them a 1-800 number.

I ask you again, Minister: Who did you talk to about this? You can't get anyone to believe that you heard serious allegations about a prominent member of the Liberal Party and then simply went home and went to bed. Is that what you want us to believe?

1040

Hon. Peter Fonseca: As Minister of Labour, I must be impartial and I must be fair. The last thing I want to do is jeopardize an investigation by providing information. It's important that a minister in a regulatory ministry is not seen to be participating in an investigation. The federal minister himself said on CTV News, "The allegations relate to multiple different statutes at different levels of government. There's no single, one-stop shopping to deal with these kinds of offences. It is kind of complex. I am informed by my officials that they're aware of the allegations of violation of section 124 of the Immigration Act. They're looking at that, of course. And as a minister"—this is the federal minister—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: This minister wants to suggest, as an example, that if the Solicitor General at a meeting heard allegations about criminal behaviour, he wouldn't report them to his ADM of policing or his deputy minister or the police service in the area responsible. Of course he would.

This minister hasn't done his job. I want to touch on the role of the education minister and her interaction with the minister on this, because she's complicit in this as well. Minister, did Minister Wynne confront you after the meeting and encourage you to report these cases of abuse? Is that why she's getting off with a free pass today and you're under the gun in this alone because of this shameful failure to act?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: Just to get on the record again, this is from Minister Kenney in regard to a interview he had with CTV News, that when they're looking at section 124 of the Immigration Act, "they're looking at that, of course. And as a minister, I'm keeping my hands off from any such investigation." But one caregiver shared her story as reported by the Philippine Times. It was a story of abuse. What did Minister Kenney do with that information? He certainly didn't pick up the phone and call my office or report it to my ministry. According to the Philippine Times, another caregiver, Maribel Beato, had come prepared to tell her story but was told by the minister's staff that only one caregiver could speak—only one caregiver. She was not allowed to share her story with Minister Kenney. That is very—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Final supplementary.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: That's disgusting tripe from this minister. In Jim Coyle's column today in the Star he reminds us of Minister Wynne's requirement that school staff report serious incidents. Surely she couldn't be two-faced enough not to follow her own dictum.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I just ask the honourable member to withdraw that comment, please.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: —a new dictionary in this place. I withdraw.

She must have urged you to take action, and you failed. So again your credibility is coming into question, and her absence today is even more understandable. Again, Minister, what advice did the Minister of Education give you regarding the abuse allegations regarding a Liberal ally?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I would just remind all honourable members of the tradition within this place of not making reference to a member's attendance.

Hon. Peter Fonseca: Again, as reported by the Philippine Times, one caregiver came forward to be able to share her story to Minister Kenney and his staff that were there, and she was not allowed to do so. She was very disappointed that her voice was not heard and the voices of other caregivers were not heard in that forum. That's the approach of the federal government. They want to hear from only one person, and one person only. Our approach has been to reach out to the community, to meet with all caregivers, all advocacy groups and all stakeholders to hear from them, to be able to provide and put the protections in place to help and support them. That's what we are doing at the Ministry of Labour. We are doing it in a fair, impartial way by providing the resources necessary to follow through with—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

PROTECTION FOR WORKERS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Minister of Labour. This morning, Ontarians are having serious doubts about the judgment and the competence of this minister, a minister who is responsible for protecting the rights of all Ontario workers. I have a few questions for him this morning, but I want to start with a very, very basic one.

When he met with caregivers at the constituency office of the Minister of Education on April 25, what did he say after at least two of them made serious allegations of employer abuse and harassment?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: Again to the member opposite, the last thing that I would ever want to do is jeopardize an investigation and provide any incorrect information to our officials. What we did is provide the access—immediately—so that those caregivers who felt that they had been abused or that an injustice had taken place could call. I know that the members opposite don't want me, as a minister, to be directing investigations.

Think about what they would say if I had done that, if I had done what they are asking me to do in other situations. What if I read a newspaper story about an opposition MPP mistreating their employees? What if I then asked my staff to investigate that matter that we all read about? That—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: On April 25, at least two caregivers made serious allegations of employer abuse and harassment at the hands of an employer whom this

minister knows well. The minister's response was to give them a toll-free number. He didn't follow up with his deputy the first thing Monday morning so that ministry officials could immediately begin investigating the complaints. That would have been the obvious course of action for a Minister of Labour to pursue: send it to your deputy and have the investigation begin. Instead, he gives out a toll-free number.

Why didn't this Minister of Labour do the right thing and immediately order his officials to investigate these serious cases of abuse?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: At all the round tables that I participated in where we've gathered information, we have heard many stories of abuse from many, many caregivers. Most of the allegations stem back to a flawed, broken federal program.

But I say again to the leader of the third party over there: What if I read in a newspaper about an MPP here in this chamber who had, in some way, abused her workers? I ask that leader of the third party: What would that leader want to happen? What does that leader feel that the Ministry of Labour should do?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The point is that this Minister of Labour failed to take action expected of a minister on a direct information complaint about abuses in the workplace. He failed. He failed to instruct his officials to follow up on the complaints that he heard on April 25.

In the opinion of New Democrats, that represents a complete dereliction of duty on the part of the minister of the crown who has the ministerial responsibility and the ethical obligation to protect all workers in this province. How could this minister have been so hopelessly derelict in carrying out his responsibilities?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: With all the round tables and consultations we've been having with live-in caregivers, with nannies, with stakeholders and with advocacy groups, we have heard about many disturbing, alarming stories. With all of them, immediately, I have encouraged them to call our ministry to speak with dedicated, highly trained, professional officials who can deal with their claims or provide them information and support and help them through the process. That is what a Minister of Labour should do: work with the community impartially, in a fair manner. As Minister of Labour, in no way would I want to jeopardize any of those allegations or claims that have come forward at those round tables—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

1050

PROTECTION FOR WORKERS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Back to the Minister of Labour: The minister's lack of action on this is nothing short of scandalous. He has failed miserably to uphold his ministerial responsibility, not to mention his ethical obligation to take these workers seriously and have their allegations investigated promptly and thoroughly. How

can he possibly continue to defend this gross dereliction of duty?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: The Ministry of Labour, the McGuinty government, have been moving forward on so many fronts to help vulnerable workers in the province of Ontario. We just recently passed the temporary help agencies legislation in this House. We have increased the minimum wage—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Minister of Transportation.

Minister of Labour?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: When it comes to the live-in caregiver program, this flawed federal program, we are moving forward to bring protections to workers in Ontario in every way that we can. That's why we have a dedicated professional team behind a 1-800 hotline that has been well publicized within the community, at all our libraries. All MPPs' offices have received a letter from my office with the—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: This minister's attitude speaks to a government that just doesn't care about the plight of Ontario workers. It speaks to a labour minister who fails to enforce his own laws.

This minister is responsible for the administration of the Employment Standards Act, but he seems totally unaware of that fact. He has lost the confidence not only of those caregivers that he met in the office of Education Minister Kathleen Wynne, but all workers across Ontario. Will he now do the right thing and resign immediately?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: My job, as Minister of Labour, is to protect all workers in Ontario. That is what I will continue to do, that is what I will champion, and I will do that in an impartial and fair manner. I would hope that member would understand the responsibility of this position, and her position, and know that that would be the right way to approach this.

The real crux of the matter is a flawed, broken federal program. When we go out into the community and I listen to these very alarming, disturbing, concerning stories from live-in caregivers, from nannies, that's what they have shared with me. That's why, over a month ago, I picked up the phone and called—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: There can be no excuses here. This minister has failed miserably to act. Those caregivers deserve a labour minister who is up to the job of protecting their rights, not one who casually dismisses their concerns by offering up a toll-free number.

His conduct is shameful and unbecoming of a minister of the crown. It is time for him to go. He needs to resign. Why won't he do that immediately?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: It is unfortunate that that member does not agree with having a dedicated team behind that 1-800 number to deal with live-in caregivers, with

nannies, so that they can call and make a claim. We have these highly trained professionals to provide information and help them work through that process.

I will continue to meet with stakeholders and continue to—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): You have 10 seconds to respond.

Hon. Peter Fonseca: Again, that 1-800 number is working very effectively. In the last two weeks, we've received 120 calls. Three claims have been made—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you, Minister.

PROTECTION FOR WORKERS

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: Back to the Minister of Labour. I think that people viewing the proceedings today recognize that the minister has failed to answer every question posed by both opposition parties, hiding behind jeopardizing an investigation.

I want to go back to a very simple question that has nothing to do with an investigation. After this meeting, when you heard these accusations against a Liberal member of Parliament, did you contact anyone to make them aware of this—the Premier's office, Ruby Dhalla, anyone?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: I would like to refresh the member's memory here from something he said in Hansard on April 2, 1997. What the member said was, "I think it's quite appropriate for the Solicitor General, whoever occupies this office, not to be involved in those kinds of investigations." I think he was right when he made that point, and that is what I'm doing: I am working in an impartial, fair way.

We have to ensure there is impartiality in every case. What we do is provide people information to be able to file that complaint, to have support so that they know that their complaints, their claims, are being addressed in a very serious manner. I can assure all of those who call our office that they are being addressed—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: The Liberal Party had different standards for ministerial conduct when they were sitting in opposition. Now, clearly, that standard is in the gutter.

I believe the minister deliberately sat on this because it involved a prominent Liberal, and whether or not the Minister of Education—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd just remind the honourable member of imputing motive against the member. Please continue.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: Whether or not the Minister of Education was involved, or the Premier's office, we're not getting any answers today, but if concrete actions were taken to cover up this matter, that raises the spectre of criminality—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd just remind the honourable member and would ask him to withdraw that comment, please.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: I withdraw that.

If there were concrete actions taken to keep this under wraps, that clearly raises the spectre of criminality and suggests, Premier or Minister, to anyone that this cries out for public investigation, and you should be stepping aside while that's conducted.

Hon. Peter Fonseca: An opportunity again to refresh the member's memory, from October 29, 1996—here's what he had to say: "I am not about to direct the police with respect to how they conduct an investigation." Again, he was right then.

Here's where his party has been wrong. They pretend to care about the minimum wage, but at least two of their leadership candidates are saying that minimum wage for our most vulnerable workers should be cut. They pretend to care about hours of work, but one of their leadership candidates wants to force people to work 60-hour work-weeks. They pretend to care about labour enforcement officers, but in this particular case, the labour critic has said that our enforcement—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

PROTECTION FOR WORKERS

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: My question is to the Minister of Labour. On April 25, Minister Fonseca met with a group of live-in caregivers in the constituency office of Kathleen Wynne. After hearing allegations of flagrant abuse perpetrated by a federal Liberal MP, his only response, as we've heard, was to defer the nannies to a 1-800 number. Yet according to the government's own website, the 1-800 nanny hotline did not begin receiving calls until April 27, 2009—two days later. He didn't even have a 1-800 number to refer them to. This is buck-passing of the most serious order. Why did this minister defer the compelling allegations made by live-in caregivers to a number that wasn't even active?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: I thank the member for the question—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Minister?

1100

Hon. Peter Fonseca: I thank the member for the opportunity to share with this House that in that meeting, at that round table where we met, one of the main initiatives that we were launching was the information that the number, the 1-800 hotline dedicated to live-in caregivers, would be live at 8:30 on Monday morning. That was shared with all the live-in caregivers.

If the member had read the Toronto Star, the Toronto Star was very appreciative that we moved so quickly with that 1-800 number and a dedicated team behind that number to be able to address those concerns and to be able to take claims from any of the live-in caregivers who felt that they were discriminated against. It went online at—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: The fact is that even deferring to a 1-800 number is not enough, and the minister knows this, even if it had been operative, which it clearly was not. On February 18, 2009, you stated in this House that, "It is also important that when people are working, they are doing so in environments where employees are treated with dignity and respect." Yet when this minister heard brazen acts of employment standards violations, he did absolutely nothing—worse than nothing; he referred them to a non-existent number.

Given this minister's inability to enforce his own employment standards, will he now do the one honourable thing left and resign?

Interruption.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock for a second. I don't appreciate the chuckles from the gallery behind me.

Minister?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: I say to the member, you weren't there; I was, and I explained to the live-in caregivers their rights as workers in Ontario. We went through a fact sheet of all their rights and how to be able to immediately access their complaints, any of the claims that they would want to put forward. That's what we're doing by reaching out into the community, by distributing information and by ensuring that we have a dedicated team there to help these vulnerable workers.

I know the member agrees that the Minister of Labour should be impartial and fair and should allow for any complaints, any claims, that want to be made to be made with ministry officials who are impartial and can do their job. I think that member wouldn't want it any other way.

INFECTIOUS DISEASE CONTROL

Mrs. Liz Sandals: My question is to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. The headlines over the past couple of weeks have been dominated by news of the global outbreak of H1N1 influenza. There seem to be constant updates about this virus as new facts and information are being discovered all the time.

During the first week of the outbreak, when this virus was known as swine flu, we were constantly reassured by officials at all levels of government, as well as international organizations, that consuming pork is safe. Now the WHO is issuing words of caution, saying that people should be cautious with the handling of pork products and that pork from sick animals or animals found dead should not be consumed.

My question to the minister: Is pork safe to eat?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: I thank the honourable member from Guelph. This is a very important question, and I'm sure that all members of this Legislative Assembly would join me in confirming and affirming pork producers in Ontario and in doing all that we can, in our roles as MPPs, in our ridings to say to the people we represent that Ontario pork is safe to eat.

I think it's also important today that I would clarify—I have here, from the World Health Organization, a statement that was issued on May 7. It indicates that "to avoid any misunderstanding," the WHO "would like to reissue their joint statement...." In this statement, they indicate, "Influenza viruses are not known to be transmissible to people through eating processed pork or other food products derived from pigs."

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mrs. Liz Sandals: Thank you, Minister, on behalf of Ontario's farmers, for making that very clear.

Despite all the assurances that pork is, in fact, safe, many of Canada's trading partners have taken action and banned pork and pork products from North America. These bans on pork have had a negative impact on the market price for hogs, and producers here in Ontario—whom apparently the opposition don't care about—are concerned that demand for their product may be affected. Could the minister please update this House on precautions that have been taken in Ontario to ensure that Ontario pork remains safe?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: The Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs is working very closely with the Canadian Food Inspection Agency as it monitors signs of illness in the pork herd. Also, OMAFRA distributed on April 27 information to our industry partners, pork producers and veterinarians about the virus and what they should be looking for. We are also working very closely with the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, with the CFIA, as I indicated, and our industry partners. As well, we have alerted the Animal Health Laboratory in Guelph that they should be monitoring the situation.

To encourage testing and help with provincial surveillance, OMAFRA will cover the laboratory costs for any influenza tests from the pork herd. Typically, a fee has been charged for this, but my ministry has waived—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you, Minister.

PROTECTION FOR WORKERS

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: Back to the Minister of Labour: This has been a shameful performance on his behalf today, and hopefully we can get some answers.

The Premier was at a press scrum this morning, and he said: "It's the responsibility of women dealing with this incident themselves to take up their cases with the proper authorities." In other words, being in the presence of a minister shouldn't be an expectation that action will be taken. When victims are in front of a minister, they should have no expectation: "Go to the proper authorities if you want action taken." Is that the position your government takes with respect to victims?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: Unlike that member's party, we've reached out to vulnerable workers. We've had round tables. We have brought forward legislation in this House to protect vulnerable workers. In all of those

round tables, I shared what their rights were and that we had a dedicated team—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): There's one Speaker in this place, but I thank the others for the advice.

Minister.

Hon. Peter Fonseca: We have a dedicated team there to help them, to support them with information, to provide access and allow them to make a claim.

I can tell you that the member, if he recalls, back on April 28, 1999, said: "Personnel matters are handled by the senior public service and not by political officials. In this case that course was followed and there was no interference from a political level in those decisions."

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: This minister had the gall to have a photo op with these victims and then did absolutely nothing to help them. He gave them a 1-800 number and kept the allegations against the Liberal member under wraps.

There's an odour here. Maybe it leads to the Premier's office. We know that the first place the minister ran to yesterday after question period was the Premier's office—right down to the Premier's office before he would appear before the media.

Whatever the response—and we're not getting any meaningful answers from the minister today—the people of Ontario deserve answers. This minister has failed in his responsibilities. He should be stepping aside. Again we ask him to do the right thing, the honourable thing: step down until a full investigation can be conducted.

1110

Hon. Peter Fonseca: It's very unfortunate that that member and his party have voted against, time in and time out, legislation to protect Ontario workers when it comes to health and safety, when it comes to vulnerable workers, when it comes to employment standards, when it comes to raising the minimum wage, when it comes to temporary help agencies—over and over, behind the 1-800 line, that dedicated team of officials. The labour critic himself has said, "You have too many officials. You are being too proactive when it comes to protecting workers." He can't have it both ways. He's playing politics with a very, very serious matter.

PROTECTION FOR WORKERS

Mr. Michael Prue: My question is to the Minister of Labour. Yesterday in the House of Commons, Minister Kenney noted that the allegations against MP Ruby Dhalla violate several sections of the federal immigration laws. My question to him is simply: Was this minister aware that hiring nannies illegally is a violation of the federal Immigration and Refugee Protection Act?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: As we've been out in these round tables, consultations with nannies, we have heard many allegations as well as disturbing stories that do

involve federal programs, a live-in caregiver nanny federal program. That's why I—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'm going to warn the member from Renfrew that if he persists, I will have to proceed with other measures.

Hon. Peter Fonseca: In those round tables, what we have been hearing is that many of the accusations stem back to a flawed, broken federal program. I asked, in the meeting that we had on April 25, all of those that were there and some that would be meeting with Mr. Kenney the next day, to please—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Michael Prue: It's obvious to me that the minister did know that that was an illegal activity. Part 3, section 126 of the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act states: "Every person who knowingly ... or attempts to counsel, induce, aid or abet any person to directly or indirectly misrepresent or withhold material facts relating to a relevant matter that induces or could induce an error in the administration of this act is guilty of an offence."

That offence is punishable both by way of summary conviction and indictment, and a person can get prison time or a hefty fine. My question to the minister: Knowing this now, will the minister do the honourable thing right now and resign?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: Just to finish off where I left, I had called Minister Kenney over a month ago to tell him about the litany of problems that we have with this federal program. Minister Kenney yesterday admitted in the House of Commons that most of the allegations in this case and others do fall under federal jurisdiction, either through Immigration Canada or the Canada Revenue Agency. I also wrote Minister Kenney yesterday to invite him out to round tables, where we don't limit conversation to one caregiver but we open up it to everybody, so that he can hear for himself how broken a federal live-in care program he has. This is a very serious matter. It needs to be fixed. We're doing all we can here to protect vulnerable workers in the province of—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

REMOTE DRUG DISPENSING

Mr. Jim Brownell: My question is to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Minister, this morning's Toronto Star had a brief article about a new technological innovation that would make it easier for Ontarians to fill their drug prescriptions. Remote dispensing, which would allow Ontarians to get their prescriptions from a machine, sounds like a promising initiative. At the same time, I am wondering about the safety concerns. How will this machine ensure that drugs are administered safely?

Hon. David Caplan: I want to thank the member from Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry for the question. I think these machines have incredible potential to be used in retirement homes, doctor's clinics or in remote or rural communities right around Ontario. When it comes

to drug dispensing, safety is my number one priority, so I'm pleased to tell the House that these machines are safe, efficient and reliable. In the course at Sunnybrook, not one error was made.

The machines allow Ontarians to speak with a pharmacist via teleconference. The pharmacist can then administer the prescription from the machine. Here's how it works: The patient inputs a prescription from their doctor. The machine connects that patient with a pharmacist at an off-site location via video conferencing. The patient and the pharmacist can speak to each other about the drug's possible side effects. The pharmacist will supervise the machine as it dispenses and labels the appropriate drug.

This will perhaps give greater access and—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Jim Brownell: This sounds like a positive initiative, with the potential to make it easier for some patients to get needed prescriptions and medications. I know that many Ontarians, especially elderly Ontarians, can have difficulty getting to pharmacies. Having a remote dispensing machine in a doctor's office or at a retirement home would make it easier for them to access needed medication without having to travel. There are likely other benefits to remote dispensing. I ask the minister: How will allowing remote dispensing benefit Ontarians?

Hon. David Caplan: I really want to thank the member, because remote dispensing and this initiative fit well with our other health objective. We want to create a system that makes it easier for Ontarians to access health care and health care providers wherever they are, whenever they need it. If rolled out across the province, these machines have tremendous potential to reduce the time needed to fill prescriptions. They also provide the possibility of 24-hour, seven-day access to drugs for patients.

Allowing remote dispensing also has economic benefits. It may attract new business development to Ontario. It could enable new technological innovations in health care.

Interjection: Win-win.

Hon. David Caplan: My colleague from Scarborough says "win-win"; he's absolutely right. It could give pharmacists the opportunity to expand their current operating models. Patients, of course, will benefit through easier access, greater convenience and enhanced patient safety. That is the hallmark of the reforms that this government has brought in: greater access—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

PROTECTION FOR WORKERS

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: My question is also to the Minister of Labour. Minister, you swore an oath of office to faithfully discharge your duties as a public servant and to observe and comply with the laws of Canada and the laws of Ontario. You violated that oath when, after hearing the disturbing allegations from these nannies, you did not act to support the people who came to you in their

time of need and expected you to uphold the laws of Ontario.

Was this just a photo-op? If it was, come clean. But tell us: Did you contact your deputy minister? What did you and Kathleen Wynne discuss about this issue? Most importantly, did you immediately inform Premier McGuinty?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: I'd like to thank the member for the question. Again, I take my position as Minister of Labour very seriously. I understand the responsibility of this position and I do it in an impartial and fair way. The last thing that I would want to do, I say to that member, is jeopardize an investigation and provide any incorrect information. That information should be provided to Ministry of Labour officials. We have a dedicated team there to investigate and to deal with any claims that come forward.

It's important that a minister of a regulatory ministry is not seen to be participating in an investigation. That is the right approach, I say to that member, and I would hope that she respects and understands the position and how the position should deal with these matters. But what I have—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: I'm not asking for particulars of the investigation; I'm asking what the minister's actions were immediately after he found out something very wrong had happened.

Minister, you have had a long time to act on this. You have clearly violated your oath of office and you have abandoned the principles that we hold dear in our country. I expect more from you as an MPP, but even more as the Minister of Labour.

Minister, I'm asking again: What did you discuss with Kathleen Wynne after you heard about these allegations, and did you immediately inform Premier McGuinty of what had happened?

1120

Hon. Peter Fonseca: The real issue here is a flawed, broken federal program. Time after time I've heard from exploited caregivers that they were afraid to make official complaints; they're afraid to make official complaints about their employers. We want those caregivers to be able to come forward to make those complaints and to be able to recover wages that are owed to them, which they have been denied, but we do not want to make that decision for them to come forward without their co-operation. It is up to them.

We provided access—we did that immediately—and we have asked them to come forward, but I need Minister Kenney to address these very, very serious matters that relate back to a broken federal program, because that is what I keep hearing from these—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

PROTECTION FOR WORKERS

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: To the Minister of Labour: The minister did nothing to ensure the investigation of these

serious allegations. No one followed up; no one got back to these women. The only thing we do know for sure is that the minister did nothing—nothing—to help these women. The question is: Is this minister arrogant, incompetent or both?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: The member is completely wrong. Again, the member was not there. What happened in that very open meeting, where there was a lot of sharing going on by all the caregivers—over 30 caregivers were there sharing information. We took that information, we provided fact sheets, we provided the supports that we have in the Ministry of Labour to help them. There are professionals, dedicated staff, there to help these vulnerable workers.

We will continue to champion, on this side of the House, vulnerable workers. That is what we have done since we formed government in 2003 and that is what we will continue to do. We have a very broken federal program that needs fixing, but we are going to do our part to ensure that those workers—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Again to the Minister of Labour: He knows that he and his staff did nothing to help these vulnerable women who disclosed almost slave-labour conditions in Ontario. The women couldn't leave, they were forced to do work that had nothing to do with their job description and they were working for just over \$1 an hour. But when it comes to enforcing Ontario's labour laws, the Minister of Labour—and I repeat—did nothing to help these women.

The House has no confidence that the Minister of Labour has the moral or ethical standards to protect the workers in this province. The only question remaining is: Why won't he resign immediately?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: We take our labour laws in this province very seriously. I say to the member that if she knows anybody who has been unjustly treated—anybody, here at Queen's Park or throughout the province of Ontario—they should contact the Ministry of Labour. They should call the Ministry of Labour, where we have dedicated staff, well-trained professionals able to address those claims and provide information in terms of employee rights so that those investigators can get on and do their work to investigate any of those claims.

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

Mr. Khalil Ramal: My question is for the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services. Minister, this week marks Emergency Preparedness Week for all jurisdictions across Canada, and I think this matter is important for all of us in this place.

We have all seen devastating and disastrous events touch the lives of thousands of people across the world, and we recognize the need to be prepared.

Emergency first responders are well trained and well equipped to handle many situations, from flooding similar to what occurred in Manitoba to the ice storm faced

by residents of eastern Ontario and Quebec more than a decade ago. I think it's important to have people prepared to support our province. But I also know that the focus of Emergency Preparedness Week is on personal response and obligation. Would you tell me what we are doing as Ontarians to prepare for this event?

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: First of all, I want to thank the member from London-Fanshawe for his very professional approach to emergency preparedness. He is absolutely right. Our emergency responders will be on the scene when necessary, but we have a responsibility as well, and that's why the theme of Emergency Preparedness Week this year is, "Is your family prepared?" Unfortunately, only 10% of Ontario families have an emergency evacuation plan. Only 12% of Ontario families have an emergency preparedness kit. Both are essential in ensuring our personal safety. So this year we encourage everyone to develop that emergency preparedness plan that can save your loved ones and to put together that emergency preparedness kit.

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I will encourage my constituents to visit the Emergency Management Ontario website to ensure that their kit is complete and able to meet their needs in the case of emergency.

I also want to ask the minister: Some people take, as an emergency measure, some personal belongings, like a pet. Sometimes when an emergency hits, they forget behind them many different pets and animals that are dear to them. What happened during Katrina is that so many people and so many pets were left behind. Can you tell us how they can take into consideration emergency measures, especially when 72 hours is not enough to prepare themselves to evacuate and also take their pets with them? Can you inform the House and the people of Ontario what we can do to help those people?

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: I want to thank the member again for that question, because it is important. The emergency preparedness kit is a personalized kit. If in fact you have a pet, you have to make sure that you provide for that pet for the first 72 hours of an emergency. Obviously, we want to make sure that the pet has food. If it's a dog, you'd want it to have a leash. You'd want to ensure that it had water. As you put that kit together, you put it together for your family members and for that which you love. In this instance, we're talking about pets. You also have to make sure, in that evacuation plan, that if you're going to a shelter—you have to think this out. You have to find out if that shelter accepts animals. If it doesn't, look on our website, emergencymanagement-ontario.ca, and we will give you the details necessary to prepare properly.

HYDRO TRANSMISSION LINE

Mr. Ted Arnott: My question is for the Minister of Energy and Infrastructure. Hydro One's Bruce-to-Milton transmission reinforcement project, which is a new 180-kilometre, double-circuit, 500-kilovolt transmission line, is causing grave concern in Wellington-Halton Hills.

Many people whose homes are along the proposed corridor are not being treated fairly when it comes to compensation discussions. Some would say their lives have been put on hold; others would say their lives have been destroyed.

I have attended many meetings, written many letters and spoken to three successive McGuinty Ministers of Energy to represent my constituents on this issue. A few of these constituents are here today: Rob Barlow, Steve and Pat Crouse, Julia Jenkins and Anne Clifford. My question to the minister is very simple: Will the minister meet with my constituents, here today, right after question period, hear their stories and instruct Hydro One to restart fair negotiations on their compensation?

Hon. George Smitherman: here we have an honourable member asking a minister of the crown to directly interfere in a process where people specialized in the issue of evaluation of land are doing that work, and he asks me as a minister of the crown, as a politician, to interfere in this process. I don't get that party.

1130

No, I will not take such a meeting. I've told the honourable member that on countless occasions over the last few weeks. The process that Hydro One has initiated is a process that's ongoing, and the issues of evaluation associated with the land have been established, in part, through a working group of the very owners themselves. We're at the point where Hydro One is making voluntary offers of settlement. The EA process is ongoing, and the process should be allowed to continue, notwithstanding that the honourable member has drawn the judgment that his constituents are not being treated fairly. I don't know on what professional basis he has the capacity to make such an evaluation.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Ted Arnott: Just now, we saw the face of government arrogance and contempt for the people at its worst, and it wasn't a pleasant sight.

In my 19 years here, it's been routine for ministers to meet concerned constituents after question period. With Bill 150, the minister is seeking extraordinary new powers over Ontario's electricity system. How can he now say that he has no authority to help my constituents and others along the proposed line, Bruce to Milton? They are not getting a fair deal. Why is this minister sidestepping his responsibility? Why is he allowing Hydro One to zap my constituents?

Hon. George Smitherman: Again, I say to the honourable member that it is not a meeting that I am opposed to. It is the honourable member's suggestion that a minister of the crown, in the midst of a process on the issue of land evaluation where specialists are involved in a transparent process, should insinuate himself into such a process. I'd be very happy to take a variety of meetings that the honourable member might suggest; I just think the one that he's suggesting at this time is highly inappropriate. Accordingly, no, I will not be available to meet with his constituents, but I do continue to encourage all parties, including Hydro One, to work through the

process that has been established, that is transparent and that has valuation of land based on a process that involves the very affected landowners themselves.

PROTECTION FOR WORKERS

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: My question is to the Minister of Labour. Exactly two weeks ago today, the minister stood in this House and told a story of when he was a teenager and working in a makeshift call centre set up in a basement. He said, "... what I can tell you is that it was a horrific experience." He said he didn't do anything about it because he didn't know his rights.

He's done nothing for the nannies. He's the Minister of Labour. Does he know the province's labour laws now? That's the question.

Hon. Peter Fonseca: The member is quite right that it was a horrific experience, and back in that day I did not have information and access to professionally trained officials to be able to help me with that case. But that's completely different now here in Ontario. What we've been doing is reaching out to those caregivers, and in all those meetings we've been listening carefully. We have been providing that access immediately so that they can get the supports that they need.

I can tell the member that what is happening is, we have a dedicated enforcement unit that is already investigating those complaints. They are doing their job. We are also continuing with our consultations so that, as we move forward with legislation, we can get it right and we can close all those loopholes that are under provincial jurisdiction.

But this stems back—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: We're talking about the Minister of Labour here. His mission is "to advance safe, fair and harmonious workplace practices that are essential to the social and economic well-being of the people of Ontario."

After the minister was made aware of these serious allegations, why didn't he ensure that those nannies were working in a fair and safe workplace? They were still at risk. Since the minister failed to act on this scandal, what he should do—we all know it—is resign. Why won't he do that?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: As we've been out in these consultations, round tables, listening to these stories—and the stories have been very alarming—I have encouraged these nannies to come forward and to share their stories with our ministry officials. But I can't do that for them. I know that many of them feel very vulnerable because, due to a federal program that is severely broken, they may be deported out of the country. That's what they're saying. They have said to me personally, "Minister, you are doing all the right things for Ontario, but we understand that this is a broken federal program that needs to be fixed and we are very scared of being deported."

So we will—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I would like to correct the record of the Minister of Labour just to indicate that we voted—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I remind the honourable member that that is not a point of order and that one member cannot correct another member's record.

DEFERRED VOTES

FAMILY STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 2009

LOI DE 2009 MODIFIANT DES LOIS EN CE QUI CONCERNE LE DROIT DE LA FAMILLE

Deferred vote on the motion for third reading of Bill 133, An Act to amend various Acts in relation to certain family law matters and to repeal the Domestic Violence Protection Act, 2000 / Projet de loi 133, Loi modifiant diverses lois en ce qui concerne des questions de droit de la famille et abrogeant la Loi de 2000 sur la protection contre la violence familiale.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1135 to 1140.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The members please take their seats.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Order. Some of us might like to have lunch.

All those in favour will please rise one at a time and be recorded by the Clerk.

Ayes

Aggelonitis, Sophia
Albanese, Laura
Arthurs, Wayne
Balkissoon, Bas
Bartolucci, Rick
Bentley, Christopher
Berardinetti, Lorenzo
Best, Margaret
Bradley, James J.
Broten, Laurel C.
Brown, Michael A.
Brownell, Jim
Cansfield, Donna H.
Caplan, David
Colle, Mike
Dombrowsky, Leona
Duguid, Brad

Duncan, Dwight
Fonseca, Peter
Gerretsen, John
Gravelle, Michael
Hoy, Pat
Jaczek, Helena
Jeffrey, Linda
Johnson, Rick
Kular, Kuldip
Kwinter, Monte
Lalonde, Jean-Marc
Leal, Jeff
Levac, Dave
Mangat, Amrit
McMeekin, Ted
Meilleur, Madeleine
Mitchell, Carol

Naqvi, Yasir
Pendergast, Leeanna
Phillips, Gerry
Ramal, Khalil
Rinaldi, Lou
Ruprecht, Tony
Sandals, Liz
Sergio, Mario
Smith, Monique
Smitherman, George
Sousa, Charles
Takhar, Harinder S.
Wilkinson, John
Wynne, Kathleen O.
Zimmer, David

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): All those opposed will please rise and be recorded by the Clerk.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 49; the nays are 0.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I declare the motion carried.

Third reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

There being no further business, this House stands recessed until 1 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1143 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I'm very pleased to welcome Patrick Munhall, a grade 4 student from Canadian Martyrs in Penetang, in the members' gallery. He's an up-and-coming young leader who is very active in his school's government. Welcome, Patrick.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

WORLD ASTHMA DAY

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: I'm very pleased to rise in the House today to recognize World Asthma Day, which took place this past Tuesday, May 5.

The purpose of this day is to raise awareness about the effects asthma has on those who suffer from it, and this year to draw attention, in particular, to the theme that there are steps that sufferers and caregivers can take to control the symptoms.

Regrettably, asthma affects more than three million Canadians—almost a third live in Ontario. It is unfortunate, but it's estimated that 10 people die each week from this disease in Canada. Asthma cases are growing and will persist in growing, particularly as air pollution levels worsen and continue to make a normal life harder to achieve for asthma sufferers.

This asthma issue was first addressed by our government in 2000, when we committed \$4 million in annual funding to develop an integrated and comprehensive plan of action. This step by the PC government in 2000 was the first in Ontario's history. Today, we require the same type of coordinated and collaborative action more than ever to deal with the growing incidence of asthma in our province and to assist the sufferers.

PROFESSIONAL HOCKEY FRANCHISE

Ms. Sophia Aggelonitis: As a dedicated hockey fan and a proud Hamiltonian, the latest news is very exciting. Our great city of Hamilton could be the new home of an NHL team.

From Hamilton minor hockey to the Bulldogs, our city has a long and proud history of hockey, and the addition of an NHL franchise would be a central part of this legacy.

I know that southern Ontarians, and especially Hamiltonians, are very enthusiastic about bringing another franchise to Ontario and Canada.

Pick up a copy of today's Hamilton Spectator and you will find that from page A1 to A11 this is the story of the day. The reason for this is no secret: Economically, this would be a major boon for Hamilton and Ontario.

In addition to attracting fans from across southern Ontario, an NHL team would be a strong partner for our businesses, not to mention the benefits of healthy competition for the NHL.

I believe that our city, Hamilton, Ontario, is the right place at the right time. There's no question that Hamiltonians are ready and willing to receive an NHL team, and I'll be with them each step of the way.

MILTON DISTRICT HOSPITAL

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: I'm not sure Hamilton should get a franchise, because if they got one, Toronto would want one too.

I rise yet again today to ask the Minister of Health to please review and respond to Halton Healthcare Services' proposal for the expansion of Milton District Hospital. The proposal was sent last September, eight months ago. Why is this taking so long?

There are now two community groups working diligently to raise public awareness, lobby the government and work with local governments in fundraising efforts. One of these groups has recently been funded by the town of Milton, while the other is a grassroots volunteer effort. That should demonstrate to the Minister of Health how much the people of Milton care about their health care and how far they are willing to go to receive an expansion.

Thousands have signed petitions. They have written letters, they have phoned my office and the Office of the Premier, and now they have organized. And what has the government said in response? The Minister of Energy and Infrastructure told us to be quiet and show him some money; the Minister of Health told us how proud he was that other hospitals were being built around Ontario. Meanwhile, the people of Milton, the fastest-growing town in Canada, are left precariously without adequate health care.

When will the Minister of Health approve the business plan so Milton can move forward with the sizing study and eventual expansion of the hospital? These unprecedented delays are unacceptable to the people of Milton and should give grave concern to the people of Ontario about the management capacity of this government.

CHILD CARE

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Speaker, as you are aware and as members of this Legislative Assembly are aware, there is a tremendous amount of concern regarding the stability of early learning and child care funding in Ontario.

The expiry of federal funds and no commitment from the province in the recent provincial budget is a crisis in child care. Failure to address this crisis by the provincial government could lead to cuts of up to 22,000 child care

subsidies and 4,000 lost jobs in the early learning and child care sector.

On May 12, child care activists will be here at the Legislature, meeting with MPPs and pressing their case. The Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care recently proposed a two-year plan to save the threatened child care subsidies, build 7,500 new affordable child care spaces and create 1,500 new jobs in early learning and child care. In addition, they've called on the provincial government to meet pay equity commitments which would raise the wages of underpaid child care staff.

If we're actually going to have a 21st-century economy, if we're actually going to build the kind of society that we want, we need to invest in child care; we need to invest in child care workers. The fact that this government has ignored the actions of the federal government and has not made provisions for funding of child care is going to mean desperation for many families and disruption of their lives. I call on the Liberal government, the McGuinty government, to actually listen to the child care coalition and the child care activists and make the investments we need.

CELEBRATE ONTARIO

FÊTONS L'ONTARIO

Mr. Jean-Marc Lalonde: Mr. Speaker, I'm very pleased to share with you and the members of this House that tourism in Glengarry-Prescott-Russell has just received a \$140,000 boost through the McGuinty government's Celebrate Ontario program.

Through Celebrate Ontario, our government is supporting the growth of four popular events in my riding. These are le festival de Noël de Casselman; le festival de la curd de St-Albert; the Multicultural Festival in the township of North Glengarry; and the Russell Fair. This support will help boost our local economy by attracting new audiences and generating more economic activities in Glengarry-Prescott-Russell.

The Celebrate Ontario 2009 program is providing \$11 million to 224 festivals and events across Ontario, an increase of 150% over last year. Since 2007, Ontario has invested a total of \$25 million for festivals and events through Celebrate Ontario.

Je voudrais offrir mes plus sincères remerciements au ministre du Tourisme pour réunir ma communauté avec ces divers festivals.

PORK INDUSTRY

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: This morning, the member from Guelph questioned the opposition's concern for pork producers in Ontario, and I would like to correct the record.

In this Legislature, over and over we have raised the difficult situation pork producers have been facing. When we pointed out that the McGuinty government's program missed new and young pork farmers, the member from

Guelph didn't feel it necessary to stand up for them then. When the cheques went to retired farmers instead of the people who were losing money on every pig they shipped, none of the Liberal backbenchers stood up for them then.

We know that as a result of H1N1, pork prices have already dropped. We know the farmers are worried. Many of those farmers are already vulnerable because they were missed under the OCHHP program payments.

We are ready and willing to work with the government to design a program that will help our hog farmers get through this. We will work with you to ensure that this time, a program is in place that works for all hog producers. We will work with you to get the message out that our pork is safe to eat.

Yesterday in Ottawa, the federal Minister of Agriculture held a free lunch to promote Ontario pork. Rather than pointing fingers across the Legislature, I encourage the minister to take us up on our offer and work together. Let's take concrete steps to support our pork farmers.

In the meantime, we will continue to do everything we can to encourage Ontarians to keep on enjoying Ontario pork.

1310

CHARITIES

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: We all know that the global economic crisis has caused a lot of families and businesses to tighten their belts and to rein in spending. Usually when that happens, one of the first areas to suffer is the spending that takes place in the charitable sector. But I'm proud to share with the House today an example that defies this trend.

In recent years I've been privileged to work with a charity in Kenya, Africa, called the Mully Children's Family Charitable Foundation. It's an organization for abandoned, abused, HIV/AIDS-affected and infected street children and orphans.

Recently, the foundation has benefited tremendously from the generosity of Apotex. It's the largest Canadian-owned pharmaceutical company in the country, and it's headquartered right here in Ontario. Apotex recently donated essential medicines to the family village. This donation is worth over \$150,000, and it's going to provide hundreds of street kids and AIDS orphans with all their pharmaceutical needs, to help them live a healthy life.

This is not the first time that this company, Apotex, has come to the table. Last October, I informed the House when they delivered nearly seven million tablets of HIV/AIDS medication to Rwanda, a decision that would help to save nearly 21,000 lives.

What lessons can we draw from this? What I've learned is that despite the incredible economic challenges we face, time and time again the businesses, families and people of Ontario rise to the occasion and help others to face them as well.

CANADIAN TULIP FESTIVAL

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: It gives me great pleasure to rise today and share with this House the landmark Canadian Tulip Festival taking place in my great riding of Ottawa Centre. This remarkable festival is in its 57th year and will bring 18 straight days of entertainment and enjoyment to Ottawa's residents and visitors, from May 1 to 18.

I would like to compliment the hard-working team that makes this event world-class year over year, including David Luxton, chairman; Julian Armour, executive director; and Teri Kirk, president—and of course a big thank you to the staff and volunteers who make it happen.

In 1945, the Netherlands presented Ottawa with 100,000 tulip bulbs in appreciation of the safe haven provided in Ottawa to Holland's exiled royal family during the Second World War. After many seasons of enjoyment of these flowers, the tulip festival was formalized in 1953.

Each spring, over 600,000 people from all over North America, Europe and Asia make over a million visits to the Canadian Tulip Festival. Studies show that it has a \$50-million economic impact annually on the Ottawa region.

Highlights this year include musical performances by numerous local, national and international groups; the internationally renowned Nanjing Acrobatic Troupe; and an interactive circus.

The government's Celebrate Ontario program has contributed \$300,000 to the Canadian Tulip Festival in both 2008-09 and 2009-10, and the tourism event marketing partnership program has contributed \$87,000.

I encourage all of Ottawa's residents and visitors to please come and enjoy the tulip festival.

PREMIER'S AWARDS FOR TEACHING EXCELLENCE

Mr. David Zimmer: It gives me great pleasure to rise in the House today in recognition of the 20 educators and school support staff who recently received the Premier's Awards for Teaching Excellence.

Each day, parents hand over their most precious gift, their children, to teachers. With this gesture of trust comes the challenge of guiding children to becoming effective, empowered and creative adults.

The McGuinty Liberals commend the work that all teachers and school board staff do to help students reach their full potential. The awards are a great way to recognize those individuals who make a difference in education.

It also gives me distinct pleasure to recognize two Toronto recipients: teacher Vernon Kee, who engages students through the use of technology and helps them to explore global outreach opportunities; and educational assistant Vimaladevy Vijeyacumar, who is a champion of math, coaching the school's math league team and giving students the confidence to compete in provincial and

national competitions. These are but two examples of the outstanding work being done in the schools on a daily basis.

These awards signify the McGuinty government's commitment to education, and the understanding that teachers and support staff are its backbone.

I encourage all members in this House, and indeed all Ontarians, to recognize the efforts of Ontario's educators, not just through such awards but throughout the entire year.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Speaker's prerogative: I want to take this opportunity to welcome in the Speaker's gallery Charline Broderick and Sara Pereira, students at St. Joseph's College who are working here as co-op students at the Legislative Assembly. Sara, Charline, welcome to the Legislature today.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT AND SCHOOL BOARD GOVERNANCE ACT, 2009

LOI DE 2009 SUR LE RENDEMENT DES ÉLÈVES ET LA GOUVERNANCE DES CONSEILS SCOLAIRES

Ms. Wynne moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 177, An Act to amend the Education Act with respect to student achievement, school board governance and certain other matters / Projet de loi 177, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'éducation en ce qui concerne le rendement des élèves, la gouvernance des conseils scolaires et d'autres questions.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The minister for a short statement.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I'll reserve my statement for ministerial statements.

CONGENITAL HEART DISEASE AWARENESS DAY ACT, 2009

LOI DE 2009 SUR LE JOUR DE LA SENSIBILISATION À LA CARDIOPATHIE CONGÉNITALE

Ms. Jaczek moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 178, An Act to proclaim February 14 in each year as Congenital Heart Disease Awareness Day / Projet de loi 178, Loi proclamant le 14 février de chaque année Jour de la sensibilisation à la cardiopathie congénitale.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member for a short statement.

Ms. Helena Jaczek: Congenital heart disease, or CHD, is the most common cause of all birth defects, affecting one in 70 newborns. There are presently 20,000 children and 37,000 adults in the province of Ontario with CHD. Most CHD patients require lifelong specialized medical care in order to survive. CHD Awareness Day aims to highlight to the public the need for enhanced standards of care for CHD patients, as well as increased research funding and assistance to support groups.

I would like to now recognize, in the west members' gallery, many members of the Canadian Congenital Heart Alliance: its founder, John MacEachern, and members of Avi Goldstein's family. Unfortunately, Avi passed away very recently. We have with us his widow, Ericka Goldstein; his brothers, Jay and Dov; his sister, Karla; and his mother, Rookie. Other members of the Canadian Congenital Heart Alliance are Jennifer Graham and Toby Cox. We also have with us, from the adult congenital heart disease clinic of Toronto General Hospital, Dr. Erwin Oeschlin and Jeanine Harrison.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

SCHOOL BOARDS CONSEILS SCOLAIRES

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: For generations, local school boards have been a cornerstone of strong, publicly funded education in Ontario. More than 10 years ago, there were substantial changes that were made to school board governance in Ontario, and since then, several major reports, including the Royal Commission on Learning and Dr. Rozanski's Education Quality Task Force, have called for a governance review to see if the structures in place are operating as effectively as they should. That's why, last year, we assembled the governance review committee to examine how well the current governance structure is serving Ontario's education system.

Je tiens à remercier le comité de son travail acharné et saluer ceux de ses membres qui sont là aujourd'hui : Madeleine Chevalier, Denis Chartrand et Harold Brathwaite. Merci beaucoup.

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This committee, led by Madame Chevalier, consulted with trustees, school board directors, parents and parent representatives on the best practices in Ontario's publicly funded education system. Just last month we released the committee's report, which found many strengths in the current system, but it also identified some areas for improvement.

Overall, the report recommended that we clarify the mandate and duties of school boards. I just want to be clear that the intention of this exercise was the strengthening of our school boards across the province. We have 72 school boards in the publicly funded education system, and our intention in doing this review was so that we could make changes that would strengthen those boards. Overall, the board recommended that we clarify the mandate and duty of school boards. This includes promoting student achievement and well-being, delivering effective and appropriate programs and ensuring that the board's resources are well managed.

The report also made a number of other recommendations, including clarifying the roles of trustees and directors of education, putting strategic plans into place for student outcomes, as well as recommendations for professional development and other supports for the effective governance of boards.

Today this government is taking action to address many of the committee's recommendations. I'm pleased to stand in the House to introduce amendments to the Education Act. This legislation demonstrates our government's high level of respect for trustees, while strengthening school board governance and improving student achievement, which is our highest priority. If passed, this legislation would clarify the mandate and duties of school boards to emphasize their responsibility for student achievement. It would also clarify the roles of individual trustees, board chairs and directors of education. Finally, it would build on good governance practices, which we know exist, including establishing audit committees and adopting a provincial code of conduct for trustees.

I'd like to recognize some of the ministry staff here today who worked very hard on this legislation: Barry Pervin, Margot Trevelyan, Margaret Correia, Elaine Molgat, Rachel Osborne and Ken Thurston, from my office. Thank you very much for your hard work.

This government is committed to higher levels of student achievement. At the same time, we know that good governance by our trustees and directors of education is necessary to support higher levels of student achievement. This government has a great deal of respect for Ontario's trustees and directors of education. We know that they work hard every day to make the publicly funded education system work. The legislation I'm introducing today is intended to support them in their roles.

En effet, tous les intervenants dans le système ont un rôle important à jouer.

As most of you know, this is Education Week. I have been visiting even more of our schools than usual, and as always when I visit our schools, I am so very proud of what I see, and I know that everyone in this Legislature feels the same way about the schools in their ridings and across the province. You can feel the optimism and see the hard work that everyone is undertaking to create rich learning environments for students and to support each student's achievement.

This week I've seen students competing at the Ontario Technological Skills Competition at the RIM facility in Waterloo in robotics, construction, culinary arts and so many more projects. I've read with the students of Sir Wilfrid Laurier Public School in Brampton in their fabulous library, celebrating their Fairytale Extravaganza event, and I had the privilege of honouring the recipients of the Premier's Awards for Teaching Excellence and hearing the stories of inspiring teachers, principals and support staff from across the province.

I'm thrilled to see the progress that we're making, and I hope the legislation we're introducing today will lead to further progress. This legislation shows that we're staying true to our core commitments: We're working to increase student achievement, close the gap between students who are struggling and those who are not, and continue to build public confidence in our publicly funded education system, because this government is committed to not only building the best education system in the world but building the best education system for the world.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Responses?

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: I rise in the House today in response to the Minister of Education's new bill that will amend the Education Act to "make student achievement our top priority."

Minister, I'm surprised and somewhat disappointed to see that you have the nerve to introduce legislation on accountability in our school system when you yourself have demonstrated a surprising lack of accountability as of late.

I'm also shocked to hear your comments that, "Trustees are vital partners in boosting student achievement, and these changes make it clear that we're counting on them"—on them—"to make a difference." While I agree totally that trustees play a very important role in our education system, I find it interesting that you have failed to hold them to account, as evidenced in the TCDSB, for flagrant violations of the Education Act.

At a time when many of the Toronto Catholic District School Board trustees have failed to pay expenses that were deemed illegal by the auditor's report, you have the gall to introduce this legislation. Before you go reallocating responsibility to this one and that one, I suggest you get your own house in order. It is the expectation of this side of the House, and certainly of every taxpayer in Ontario, that before you do anything else with relation to trustee issues, you will recoup the funds rightfully owed to the people of Ontario.

In fact, your legislation does not even include a formal code of conduct for trustees, which was one of the key recommendations of the Hartmann report and your own ministry's school board governance report, which was tabled in April. Here we go again with legislation that has been written on the back of a napkin, and that is supposed to placate us and take the heat off the minister.

I'm here to serve you notice, Minister: I have no intention of taking the heat off you, because there is more here than meets the eye if you can stand in a photo op

with people who are looking to you for help at a time when they needed you, and all you could do is introduce governance legislation. The conflicts of interest that abound among the Toronto Catholic District School Board trustees are flagrant and offensive. Once again I say: If you really, really want to make governance a priority for your ministry, try using some on the home front first.

There's an old British saying: "Start as you mean to go on." You have started off poorly, at best, by refusing to swiftly address the violations of your trustees at the Toronto Catholic District School Board. You have continued to allow that cloud of disrepute to cast a shadow over every hard-working trustee across this province. I'm certain that the majority of trustees who are conscientiously working in the best interests of their students are as eager as I am to have you deal with this issue: deal with it immediately, and once and for all.

The Liberal methodology is to have a meeting that leads to the next meeting and the next meeting and the next meeting. Our way is to analyze the issue and then take decisive action. Instead, the minister has rushed through the bill, which is no more than a show, trying to illustrate that she is doing something. I find that rolling this bill in with student achievement and then talking about a code of conduct demonstrates that the minister is not addressing the serious issue of conflict of interest.

The truth of the matter is that when you are actually doing something, people already know. You shouldn't have to waste the time of this Legislature to prove that something is happening this week. Take action.

"Take action" means addressing the issue in a fulsome way—this bill is merely a motherhood-and-apple-pie statement. If I were a trustee, a board chair or a director of education, I would be wondering, where did the minister get the gall to do this now?

It is your job to give them the tools to do their job. What you have done here instead is once again shift the blame to another group. Until you can clear up the cloud of suspicion swirling around your own office, I suggest you let those who have experience in laying down ground rules of this nature do their job, and then by all means put forward legislation that includes this code of conduct.

I find it appalling that you can sit and laugh at comments when trustees—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I look forward to debating this bill when it comes around for full debate, because we don't get a chance to read the bill when it's introduced half an hour or 50 minutes before we hear you.

I want to comment in general about two areas that I find particularly difficult. One is the general overview, which starts, "The Student Achievement and School Board Governance Act introduces amendments to the Education Act that includes measures to promote student achievement in our public education system and to ensure that participants in the education system focus their attention and apply the public resources entrusted to them to the improvement and promotion of student

achievements, thereby enhancing the general well-being of society."

1330

As I read this, half of this bill talks about student achievement. It appears to me that it is saying that the participants in the education system are not focusing their attention on the well-being of their students and on the improvement and promotion of student achievement. I wonder why you do that. It appears that you are assigning blame to all of the participants in the education system as not doing their job vis-à-vis student achievement. I'm not quite sure why you do that. You may want to restate your view once you debate the bill.

But I am concerned, because when you talk about focusing the public resources, I have a big complaint with your government—and you, Minister—as it relates to resources or lack of resources as they relate to English-as-a-second-language programs. So many of our schools lack ESL teachers. It's not as if the board has the resources given by you and is not using them. They simply move money around to accommodate all sorts of needs, and ESL is not one of them. We've got special education needs, where 40,000 students are waiting for services, after being identified by the identification, placement and review committee, and they're suspended there without services, including 30% of our schools that are not getting any help whatsoever because they haven't been able to get any IPRCs—so identified by the Auditor General's report, which you are well aware of.

We talk about using their resources. I think to myself: Where are the resources? When parents are fundraising to the tune of \$650 million a year out of their own pockets, does it mean that schools are adequately resourced? Or do we rely on parents to fundraise to the tune of close to \$1 billion yearly to fund essential school needs that are clearly evident in our school system?

We're failing them. We're lacking librarians. We're lacking physical education teachers. We're firing educational assistants. How is it that the board is not using its resources to provide for better educational achievement? I am puzzled by this report.

Then there's section 218, which identifies, as an afterthought—because the minister says that it also brings clarity to the roles and responsibilities of other sectors, such as school boards, trustees and so on, but as an afterthought: "It also."

Look what it says about trustees: "It identifies the fundamental responsibilities of trustees as members of an elected governing body. These include the following obligations: regular attendance at school board meetings"—sure—"consultation with parents, students and supporters of the board and its strategic plans; bringing the concerns of parents, students and supporters to the board's attention; supporting the board's decisions if they have been adopted by resolution"—and so on. She was a trustee, as I was, with the Toronto board. This suggests that trustees who used to work for \$5,000 under Harris, and now anywhere from \$10,000 to \$25,000—that these trustees who have been doing this very thing are being told that they're not doing it.

What an insult, in my view, to elected school trustees, who go through the same electoral process we do to get elected. What an offence it is to those trustees, and the minister stands up and says that they have a “high level of respect for trustees.” I just don’t know how these two things mix up. So what we’ve got is a master-servant relationship: “We are the masters; you are the servants, trustees. Yes, we know you’re elected, but really, you’re not doing your job and we’re going to make sure you’re doing it.”

I look forward to the full debate on this bill in the very, very near future.

PETITIONS

PROFESSIONAL HOCKEY FRANCHISE

Mr. Jeff Leal: I have a petition today:

“Make It Seven: Support the Move of the Phoenix Coyotes to southern Ontario.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Jim Balsillie”—who was born and raised in Peterborough—“of Research in Motion has put in an offer to purchase the Phoenix Coyotes and move them to a location in southern Ontario; and

“Whereas there are a number of outstanding communities that could host this NHL franchise, like Kitchener, Waterloo, Hamilton, Mississauga, the city of Vaughan, Peterborough, Brampton, Brantford and Oakville; and”—

Mr. Paul Miller: Hamilton.

Mr. Jeff Leal: I already got Hamilton.

“Whereas an NHL franchise in southern Ontario would generate over \$1 billion annually to the GDP of the host community, in everything from arena construction, ticket sales, television and media revenues and team merchandising;

“Whereas an NHL franchise would create thousands of jobs in construction, in the hotel and restaurant industry and in tourism, marketing and promotion; and

“Whereas the hockey fans in southern Ontario are known to be the most loyal, supportive and knowledgeable hockey fans in the world; and

“Whereas the NHL Players’ Association supports more opportunities for their players in this great southern Ontario hockey market; and

“Whereas the existing NHL owners should recognize the incredible contribution made by the citizens of southern Ontario to the success of the NHL over the last 75 years, and would be wise not to ignore these loyal fans and supporters;

“We, the undersigned, call upon the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to fully support bringing the Phoenix Coyotes franchise into a southern Ontario community, and call upon the NHL board of governors not to block the shifting of the franchise to a host community in southern Ontario.”

I agree with this petition and will affix my signature to it and give it to page Alexis.

AIR QUALITY

Mr. Charles Sousa: I have a petition that reads as follows:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Ministry of the Environment (MOE) conducted 22 months of ambient air monitoring and determined that the Clarkson, Mississauga, airshed study area was taxed for respirable particulate matter (PM2.5); and....

“Whereas the study found that emissions of acrolein and acrylonitrile exceeded provincial limits; and....

“Whereas annual average 24-hour nitrogen dioxide concentrations were found to be among the highest when compared to provincial air quality index stations in the greater Toronto and Hamilton areas; and....

“Whereas the MOE stated that it would focus on achieving reductions of the target pollutants from the 57 identified emitters that currently operate in the area; and

“Whereas the Ontario Power Authority is accepting proposals from companies for the operation of a gas-fired power plant in the Clarkson airshed study area that would see a new, very significant source of additional pollution into an airshed already determined as stressed by the MOE;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That no contract be awarded by the Ontario Power Authority for the operation of any gas-fired power plant that would impact the Clarkson airshed study area.”

I will sign the petition and provide it to Grace.

PROFESSIONAL HOCKEY FRANCHISE

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I’ve got a petition signed by all members of the Petrie family in Hamilton, which says:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Maple Leaf Sports and Entertainment has the highest average ticket revenue per game in the National Hockey League; and

“Whereas the Toronto Maple Leafs are ranked the most financially valuable team in the NHL; and

“Whereas many Hamilton and greater Toronto area hockey fans are unable to attend professional hockey games due to a lack of adequate ticket supply; and

“Whereas the Hamilton and greater Toronto area boast the biggest and best market in the world for hockey fans, with Maple Leaf Sports and Entertainment bringing approximately \$2.4 billion to the local economy over 10 years; and

“Whereas a new franchise in the Hamilton and greater Toronto area is valued at \$600 million by some economists; and

"Whereas competition in both business and sports is healthy for both the Hamilton and greater Toronto area economy and sports team performance; and

"Whereas, despite having the most loyal fans in the world, the Toronto Maple Leafs have not won the Stanley Cup in over 40 years; and

"Whereas Hamilton and greater Toronto area fans deserve competitive professional hockey teams;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To request that the government of the province of Ontario express its strong support to the board of governors of the National Hockey League for the relocation or expansion of a second NHL hockey team in the Hamilton and greater Toronto area in order to realize the economic advantages to the taxpayers of the province of Ontario and to provide healthy competition to the existing Toronto NHL franchise."

I agree with this, and I'll sign it.

PENSION PLANS

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: A petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontarians are currently denied full discretionary access to their locked-in retirement accounts ... ; and

"Whereas the monies within these locked-in accounts have already been earned as deferred salary, i.e., they are not government handouts or bailouts; and

"Whereas Ontario pensioners have already demonstrated throughout life that they are quite capable of prudent financial management, given that they have raised families, bought and sold homes and automobiles, managed investments, paid their taxes, operated businesses, among other successes; and

"Whereas similar legislation passed in Saskatchewan in 2002 has been successful and has demonstrated the wisdom and prudence of retirees; and

"Whereas a quick and immediate unlocking of pension funds would act as a significant and timely stimulus to the economy during the current recession;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to support into law the private member's bill recently tabled by Mr. Ted Chudleigh, MPP Halton, allowing all Ontario pensioners, at age 55, full discretionary access to all monies accrued within their locked-in retirement accounts."

I agree with this petition, I affix my name, and I pass it to my page, Kenzie.

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PROFESSIONAL HOCKEY FRANCHISE

Mr. Mike Colle: This is a petition from the firestorm across southern Ontario called the Make It Seven coalition in support of the move of the Phoenix Coyotes to southern Ontario.

"Whereas Jim Balsillie of Research in Motion has put in an offer to purchase the Phoenix Coyotes and move them to ... southern Ontario; and

"Whereas there are a number of outstanding communities that could host this NHL franchise," whether it be "Kitchener, Waterloo, Hamilton, Mississauga," the city of Markham, "the city of Vaughan, Peterborough, Brampton, Brantford and Oakville"—all are great places to host an NHL franchise;

"Whereas" another "NHL franchise in southern Ontario would generate" hundreds of millions of dollars "annually to the GDP of the host community"—and that means jobs—"in everything from arena construction, ticket sales, television and media revenues and team merchandising;

"Whereas the hockey fans in southern Ontario"—especially in Peterborough—"are known to be the most loyal, supportive and knowledgeable hockey fans in the" whole wide "world; and

"Whereas the NHL Players' Association supports more opportunities for their players in this great southern Ontario hockey market; and

"Whereas the existing NHL owners" and Gary Bettman "should recognize the incredible contribution made by the citizens of southern Ontario to the success of the NHL over the last 75 years, and" Gary Bettman "would be wise not to ignore these loyal fans ... ;

"We, the undersigned, call upon the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to fully support bringing the Phoenix Coyotes franchise into a southern Ontario community, and call upon" Gary Bettman and "the NHL board of governors"—

Mr. Paul Miller: To resign.

Mr. Mike Colle: Not to resign—"not to block the shifting of the franchise to a host community in" the great part of southern Ontario, whether it be Hamilton, Peterborough, Mississauga, Vaughan, Brampton. Bring them here, Mr. Bettman.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I just remind members, and I understand their interest in trying to—

Mr. Mike Colle: If you want me to stop—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Well, I'm not talking about any specific issue. I just remind all members that when they are presenting petitions, they are to read the petitions as written and not be ad-libbing in other things.

PENSION PLANS

Mr. Peter Shurman: I have here a petition which I will read as it is written.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontarians are currently denied full discretionary access to their locked-in retirement accounts (LIRAs, LIRFs, LIFs); and

"Whereas the monies within these locked-in accounts have already been earned as deferred salary," that is, "they are not government handouts or bailouts; and

"Whereas Ontario pensioners have already demonstrated throughout life that they are quite capable of prudent financial management, given that they have

raised families, bought and sold homes and automobiles, managed investments, paid their taxes and operated businesses, among other successes; and

"Whereas similar legislation passed in Saskatchewan in 2002 has been successful and has demonstrated the wisdom and prudence of retirees; and

"Whereas a quick and immediate unlocking of pension funds would act as a significant and timely stimulus to the economy during the current recession;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to support into law the private member's bill recently tabled by Mr. Ted Chudleigh, MPP Halton, allowing all Ontario pensioners, at age 55, full discretionary access to all monies accrued within their locked-in retirement accounts."

I agree with this petition, affix my name and hand it to page Cameron.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

PROTECTION FOR WORKERS

Mrs. Carol Mitchell: I move that, in the opinion of this House, the government of Canada should protect Ontario workers' severance and termination pay when their employer goes bankrupt by amending the Bankruptcy and Insolvency Act to provide employees with preferred creditor status, so workers' salaries and compensation rank ahead of banks and insurance companies; and by increasing the maximum employee eligibility amount from the federal wage earner protection program.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Mrs. Mitchell moves private member's notice of motion number 83. Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for her presentation.

Mrs. Carol Mitchell: I'd like to start by saying that in my riding of Huron-Bruce, I have seen first hand the need to protect workers who have lost their jobs due to the global economic downturn. Losing a job is never easy, but it's particularly devastating when the job loss is a result of a bankruptcy that causes an employee to lose the wages that they are owed. The amendments to the federal Bankruptcy and Insolvency Act and the federal wage earner protection program would protect workers in two respects. The first amendment calls for the cap to be removed from the super-priority given to employees under the Bankruptcy and Insolvency Act. Currently, the act gives super-priority status to employees' claims for unpaid wages and vacation to a limit of \$2,000. While the super priority puts the claims of employees ahead of secured creditors like banks, the cap means that the employees often receive only a fraction of what they are owed in company bankruptcy. In other words, this amendment will fully place employees at the front, rather than the back, of the line when a company's assets are allocated to the creditors.

The second amendment calls for an increase to the maximum employee eligibility amount for the federal wage earner protection program. This will allow employees to recover a larger portion of their unpaid wages. This change is urgently needed because at the moment workers can only recover a maximum of \$3,000 from the program, even though this sum may only represent a fraction of the wages that they are in fact owed. The need for both of these amendments has been made clear to me by several of my constituents who have faced unfair treatment following the bankruptcy of their employers.

I will never forget the story of the many workers who were brought to my constituency office. The workers were brought to near destitution when a long-term-care home in my riding declared bankruptcy. One of the workers had worked for years at the home and she was very well known and well liked by the residents. This particular young lady, who was the mother of a very young boy, took pride in her work and she was astounded when the long-term-care home went into bankruptcy and she suddenly found herself without a job. This woman had a young mouth to feed and faced the difficult task of finding a new job. As if these challenges were not enough, she also faced an upward battle in recovering the wages that she had earned but had not received. The owners of the home were uncommunicative about whether or not she would receive the unpaid wages and showed a blatant disregard for their former employees. Meanwhile, this woman was in desperate need of these earnings in order to meet everyday necessities: rent, food and transportation, just to name a few. She spent nearly seven months in a difficult struggle to recover the wages that were rightfully hers.

In these uncertain times, there are likely to be many more people who find themselves in situations like I have described. Amending the Bankruptcy and Insolvency Act to give employees complete priority status and increase their eligibility amounts from the federal wage earner protection program would ensure that others do not suffer the same plight as the workers in my riding.

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These amendments would ensure that workers like those at the long-term-care home could receive the wages owed to them and focus on the task of finding their new job.

What these workers, and many others like them, experience during company bankruptcy is akin to robbery, and it also defies the basic principles of fairness. By voting in favour of this motion, members of this House can place their support behind changes to federal legislation that will prevent others from the injustice of losing or having to fight for the money that they have so rightfully earned. Furthermore, these amendments will allow laid-off workers to direct their full attention to making the transition to a new job.

The federal Wage Earner Protection Program Act, which was introduced in the House of Commons in 2005 and proclaimed in July 2008, represents an initial step in the right direction. The act established the wage earner

protection program and made the important provision that workers can be compensated up to \$3,000 for wages earned but not paid during the six months preceding a company's bankruptcy or receivership.

While this legislation made significant strides towards protecting workers from the pitfalls of the market forces that are certainly beyond their control, clearly there is much more work that needs to be done.

Workers need to be eligible for greater compensation through this program, and they need to have full super-priority status so that they are ranked, and thus paid, ahead of banks and insurance companies in the event of bankruptcy.

In these difficult economic times, it is imperative that we all pull together and work with one another to ease the difficulties that are being felt on a day-to-day basis. Hard-working people have become innocent casualties of the global economic turbulence that is rocking our province to its core and leaving thousands with an uncertain future. In recent weeks, we have seen this government and the federal government put aside their particular interests and partisanship to help find solutions to the challenges we face today, and it is clear that we face unique economic challenges that require new solutions.

Senior economists at some of Canada's largest banks have emphasized the need to rework elements of the federal social safety net, such as the employment insurance system, that were established after the Second World War and are now insufficient to meet the demands of the new and expanded economic challenges that we face today.

In order to confront the economic challenges of today, all levels of government must continue to work together. By supporting this resolution, members of this House can call on the federal government to make amendments to the Bankruptcy and Insolvency Act that would allow workers to receive all the wages they are owed and ensure that stories like those of the long-term-care-home workers do not become commonplace. Indeed, the amendments called for by this resolution would contribute to an expansion of the national social safety net, the strength of which has never been more important than in these difficult times.

I would encourage all members of this House to stand with me in supporting this motion and the thousands of hard-working people who face the injustice of losing wages that are rightfully theirs. I encourage all members of the House to stand for our workers. Every day, they toil diligently at their jobs, and what we can do is to ensure that their wages are met and they are paid. By moving this motion today, this will signal to our federal counterparts that it is time for a change.

So I thank you for allowing me, Mr. Speaker, to speak to such an important motion. I look forward to the debate coming from the members of the House. I'm sure this will create some lively debate, and I look forward to the opportunity to respond.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. Further debate?

Mr. Peter Shurman: With respect to motion 83 by the member from Huron-Bruce, I hate to disappoint her, but I don't think there's going to be unanimity in the House today. As a matter of fact, I will say that I'll be the only person speaking on this side of the House to this motion, because our party is of the opinion that this is a federal matter and is ill-placed being debated in private members' business in a provincial Legislature.

Labour law, as a matter of record, is a provincial jurisdiction. The motion, as it stands, is not ridiculous, because the concept is fine. The concept is to protect Ontario workers, or, for that matter, any workers who are in receipt of or would like to be in receipt of severance and termination pay when their employer goes bankrupt. That's a reasonable concept, but you present a motion on this because you can't pass a bill in the Ontario Legislature, private members' or otherwise, to effect this.

As a matter of fact, this, along with another motion we'll be debating today, is nothing more than passing the buck, not unlike what we heard this morning from the very minister who'd be responsible—the labour minister—on another aspect of provincial operations that he wants to pass to the feds. So I don't understand why we're looking at motions that call on federal jurisdictions to pass laws that have to do with the province of Ontario.

So no, don't expect my support for this motion and don't expect any support from the Progressive Conservative caucus.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Paul Miller: I'll start off with our submission, and I'll add a little at the end. The NDP supports the principle and objective that the federal Bankruptcy and Insolvency Act should be changed to provide employees with preferred creditor status so workers' salaries and compensation rank ahead of banks and insurance companies by increasing the maximum employee eligibility amount from the federal wage earner protection program.

What we do not accept is that the primary answer lies in a whole new set of talks between the provinces and the federal government.

Let me be clear. This is not a new phenomenon. I was talking about this five years ago in Ottawa with the United Steelworkers. This is something we've been looking at for years; this is not something that's new.

Laid-off workers simply can't wait for further debate. We believe that the province can act now and can do so by allowing my Bill 6 to proceed to committee and be passed by this Legislature. In one fell swoop, the vacation pay, severance, back pay—laid-off Ontario workers would be protected. The bill establishes a fund that would compensate laid-off workers for any vacation pay, severance and back pay owed to them. It passed second reading, and that happened for it to go to committee, where it died. It shouldn't have died. It should be passed in third reading and go into law.

More generally, we believe that the Ontario government has the primary responsibility—no, an absolute obligation to deal with both the pension crisis and the

shameful treatment of thousands of Ontarians regarding monies legally owed to them.

Basically, we do not accept the premise underlying this motion that the primary responsibility lies with the federal government. These issues are far more the responsibility of the province than the federal government. We will vote for this motion only because it's moving in a direction. It's old news. It's something we've been talking about.

My bill was shot down by that government right across the floor here. They didn't even read Bill 6, and now they're coming up with a genius idea to pass a motion and blame it on the feds. Be reassured, all the political energies of the Ontario New Democratic Party will be put into making sure that Mr. McGuinty's government is accountable for the crisis facing hundreds of thousands of Ontario workers.

Here is the economic context in which this debate takes place. The NDP has always been the party that puts working families first. We believe in a good job for everyone, because a good job is the best way to make sure working women and men share in Ontario's prosperity. In Ontario, manufacturing and forestry jobs are some of our very best. But there's a problem in Ontario's manufacturing and forestry heartlands: a job crisis. Since July 2004, 300,000 Ontarians in this manufacturing sector have lost their jobs. In addition to this, more than 9,000 direct jobs in the forestry products industry and about 35,000 indirect jobs have also been lost. Ontario is now losing an astonishing 35,000 jobs per month—unbelievable.

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Here are just some of the policies that the NDP has been fighting for since I've been here:

- a five-year guarantee of industrial hydro rates so that Ontario manufacturing and resource companies can count on stable, competitive hydro policies at a time when many competing jurisdictions have far lower industrial rates;

- a job protection commissioner to help at-risk companies overcome their financial difficulties and save jobs;

- a buy-Ontario policy that would ensure that streetcars, subways and buses continue to be made right here in Ontario, resulting in the protection of thousands of good-paying jobs;

- tougher plant closure legislation that would ensure that everything is done to prevent profitable plants from closing and going south; and

- pension protection that would make sure that workers get every penny they are owed from their pensions when their company becomes insolvent or goes into bankruptcy.

These people, as the member put it, have earned this. They've worked their whole lifetimes in the plants, and the rug is being pulled out from underneath them in their later years.

Now I'd like to talk specifically about Bill 6, which, I might reiterate, was ignored, not read, in committee, and passed on second reading for show. The purpose of the

bill is to create a fund that would compensate workers for unpaid regular wages, overtime wages, vacation pay and holiday pay, termination pay and severance pay. The fund works as follows: A program administrator would establish and maintain a fund to pay compensation to eligible employees. The act empowers the administrator to charge employers sufficient premiums to maintain the fund. Where employees file a claim for unpaid wages, an employment standards officer will investigate the claim and will issue an order if he or she finds the claim is warranted. The program administrator would determine the amount of premiums that are required to maintain the program fund and is empowered to establish premium rates that will vary with the kind of company and the number of employees. Employers must register with this program administrator and provide various statements relating to total wages that the employer estimates he'll have to pay in a given year. Rates would be worked out accordingly to suit the employer and his payroll so that it doesn't put businesses under like they would like to think it would.

This is a practical, doable proposal. In fact, something very much like it was established by the NDP government in 1991 and was extraordinarily successful in compensating workers for unpaid wages. The fund was killed, unfortunately, by Mike Harris. If this government is serious about protecting severance, back pay and vacation pay, it will pass my Bill 6 immediately.

I would like to clarify this situation. This week, I've been extremely frustrated. Two motions have come forward. It's like they weren't listening, they missed the bus, they missed the train or they're just doing it for show, because this was brought up a year and a half ago, right in front of them. Now when the crisis hits, all of a sudden they've come up with a brainstorm. Gee, I wonder where they got the ideas from? You think they might have had something to do with Bill 6 and picking out what they want?

The audacity of shifting the blame to the feds: We were talking about this five years ago, people. I was in the group that went to Ottawa. This is not new. You're stealing old ideas and trying to get mileage out of them. People don't want mileage. They don't want more discussions. We've got hundreds of documents to support these types of things that are there. I'll be happy to get them from the union for the members. I don't think they've read them, because they sure didn't read my bill. It's extremely frustrating, what's going on here.

I'll tell you, I think I'm up to about 20 bills from the government side that we've supported since I've been here, because we felt that the bills may not have been the way we liked them, but it was a move in the right direction and may have helped the people of Ontario. Not one good NDP bill has that side of the House supported. They don't even read it. What an insult. And I sit here today and watch these members bring forward our ideas, trying to make it look like it is a new phenomenon. These problems have been around for years, but now it's starting to face people right up front and they're scrambling for information.

I'll be more than happy to provide you with all the ammunition and information you need to support your motion, but I also need something made-in-Ontario, because if the feds don't act on it, what happens to the people? You keep blaming them to do something; if they decide not to do something, what is Ontario doing? What I can see is shifting the blame, shifting the responsibility away from them. They don't like being in the limelight. They don't like where they are right now. There's a lot of pressure from people who are losing their jobs.

If they'd sit back and smell the roses and listen to some of the ideas that come from this side of the House that were there over a year ago—and now they're coming forward and hoping we'll support it. Of course we'll support it, but it is a fluff motion. It does nothing. It's not going to bring one cent.

All I can say is that I am continually frustrated in this Legislature by the inaction and the stealing of good ideas by this government. It's a sad day. Democracy is taking a real beating.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I am very happy to speak to my colleague the member from Huron–Bruce's motion today, which deals with amending the federal Bankruptcy and Insolvency Act in order to protect workers. This motion also calls on the government of Canada to increase the maximum eligibility amount for employees as it applies to the federal wage earner protection program. These two measures are important, now more than ever, to assist vulnerable workers and make sure they are entitled to what they earn.

This issue is a complex one, which requires the attention of our government, the federal government, major employers and unions. Ultimately, however, it is the federal government that has exclusive jurisdiction over the issue of insolvencies and bankruptcies.

In the midst of the unprecedented global economic challenges we are facing, businesses, governments and employees are under tremendous pressure to continue to offer economic opportunities, remain productive and provide the supports necessary for working families. As many members of this chamber have noted, much restructuring has gone on in recent months in a number of sectors, and the shifts we have seen to date are by no means over. However, we as a government must make sure that the very workers who have built this province are adequately protected.

I have heard from constituents in my riding of York South–Weston who have expressed deep concern over this issue. Just this week, I had the opportunity to participate in a community meeting in the neighbourhood of Mount Dennis, one of Toronto's 13 priority neighbourhoods, as identified by the United Way. Concerned residents gathered to discuss the employment insurance inequalities that exist toward Ontario workers and what can be done as a community. They are looking for ways to push things forward and achieve real change, and they recognize that the responsibility lies with the federal government.

Losing a job is always difficult. In the economic climate we are living in, many workers feel vulnerable and are counting on us to ensure that their decades of hard work are protected by these changes and that banks and other creditors are not placed above workers. This motion calls for precisely that. By compelling companies that go bankrupt to, first and foremost, fulfill their wage and benefits commitments to their employees, the Canadian government will be taking an important step in assisting those who, upon leaving their workplace, deservedly seek economic well-being and security.

In closing, this motion is about fairness, and I applaud the efforts undertaken by my colleague from Huron–Bruce in drafting this motion. I believe it is important that we signal to the federal government that this is important to us and to the workers we have the privilege to represent, and it deserves the attention of the level of government which has jurisdiction over insolvencies and bankruptcies. I therefore throw my full support behind this motion.

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The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I'm privileged and honoured to stand up and speak in support of the motion brought by the member from Huron–Bruce. She is a very great advocate on behalf of the workers of the province of Ontario.

I heard an opposition party member speak to this motion, and he said that it's not our jurisdiction and we shouldn't touch it. It's very important in this place to bring these issues forward and discuss and debate. It's especially important to discuss the issues that concern workers.

I listened to the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek speak about this issue. It's not about ownership—who owns the workers, who is the advocate on behalf of workers. All of us were elected to this place to support and be protectors of the workers of this great province of Ontario.

The member from Huron–Bruce brought up a very important topic. Before I came here, before I was elected in 2003, I was in business. I used to deal with a lot of companies and a lot of people. Companies open, they prosper, but for some reason, they may go bankrupt. And when they go bankrupt, what happens? Workers who have been with those companies for many years get nothing. Who comes first? The banks and the creditors. They take all the assets. They take everything and leave nothing for the workers who worked very hard to build those companies.

In my riding of London–Fanshawe, we had a huge company called McCormicks. Many people are familiar with that company. McCormicks was established in London for almost 100 years, making candy and cookies for distribution across the province of Ontario. Many people from my riding worked there all their lives. And then, all of a sudden, McCormicks closed their doors. What happened? Many people were out of a job—no protection. Many people were close to retirement age—60, 63 years

old, 50, 55. We know that not many employers will hire people of that age. Therefore, they were left hanging in the wind, with no protection.

That's why there is an obligation for the federal government, which deals with the Bankruptcy and Insolvency Act, to amend their act in order to protect the workers of the province of Ontario.

To the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek: We are speaking about this issue today because it is very important, just as important as it was when you introduced your bill, Bill 6. We're not saying your bill isn't good, or that this motion is better. We're talking about the workers, especially the ones who are facing bankruptcies, who are facing a lot of challenges, especially in many factories. Many factories are closing down. This has raised a lot of questions.

We heard the pensioners who came to Queen's Park not too long ago, talking about their pensions: the GM, Nortel and Chrysler pensioners, and those from many companies across the province of Ontario which, for some reason, are closing the doors. Many people worked for these companies all their lives. They contributed a lot to the companies—and all of a sudden, no protections.

The honourable member from Huron–Bruce brings such an important issue for all of us to consider and urges the federal government to take their responsibility seriously and stand up and say, “Yes, we want to protect the people of Ontario. We want to protect the workers who spent their lives building this beautiful nation.”

We cannot say, “No, it's not our responsibility. It's other people's responsibility.” Yes, it's our responsibility to continue to talk about it. We have an old saying in the Arabic language: If you cannot change it with your hand, do it with your tongue. If you cannot do it with your tongue, at least do it with your heart.

What we are doing today, especially the member from Huron–Bruce, is standing up in our place and speaking up for the people of Ontario, speaking to protect the workers of this province. I hope that the Conservative government will support us in this movement. This issue is not owned only by the NDP. All of us together can stand up for the workers and create some kind of protection. I want to congratulate her for bringing forward this motion.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

M. Shafiq Qaadri: C'est un plaisir et un honneur pour moi de soutenir le projet de loi de ma collègue Carol Mitchell, the MPP for Huron–Bruce. Comme mon collègue le député parlementaire de London–Fanshawe a dit, nous devons travailler tous ensemble.

This is a very important piece of legislation, particularly given the global economic crisis that unfortunately Ontario, Toronto and many other borders and jurisdictions are finding themselves in. As my colleague has very rightly pointed out, there are anomalies, and perhaps some weaknesses, in the federal Bankruptcy and Insolvency Act and the federal wage earner protection program. We of course commend the federal government

for having come forward with some initiatives which help to address these particular issues; for example, eventually proclaimed in July 2008 but proposed initially in 2005, the federal Wage Earner Protection Program Act. It does involve some kind of abstruse, complex financial relationships as to which creditors are in line in order of payment, in order of sequence, when a company folds, when a company goes into bankruptcy.

The thing that we do, I think as a Liberal government, as part of the McGuinty tradition, is that we put people first. Of course, we understand that we must work with other organizations, with corporations, with businesses, with non-profits, with charities and so on. But ultimately our responsibility is to the people of Ontario, who have of course elected us in the democratic process—now for the second time and probably for a third; who knows—essentially to help them, especially within this downturn time.

Specifically what I'll speak about is what my honourable colleague from Huron–Bruce, Carol Mitchell, has brought forward. This is the abstruse financial framework, I guess you could say, which this particular bill addresses. First of all, the Bankruptcy and Insolvency Act does allow employees who have worked in an organization, factory or company that has filed for bankruptcy a certain amount of money, and allows them to have what is known as super-priority, meaning precedence, where they go first, beyond other creditors, whether it's another bank, another institution, or some of the suppliers who no doubt may be owed money by that particular organization. There is a limit, however; something in the order of about \$2,000. While that is certainly a step in the right direction, it is probably little consolation and less justice to the individuals who may have worked, for example, in that particular enterprise for years and years. The second amendment also has to do with a similar idea because workers can recover through another program a maximum of \$3,000. Ultimately, as my honourable colleague Carol Mitchell, from Huron–Bruce, points out quite validly, that is but a fraction of the wages they are likely owed over time.

It's incumbent on all of us in the Legislature, and certainly part of the animation or the inspiration for the McGuinty government, that we support Ontario's workers, our people, especially in this challenging economic global crisis.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate? Seeing none, the honourable member for Huron–Bruce, you have up to two minutes for your reply.

Mrs. Carol Mitchell: I want to thank the speakers from Thornhill, Hamilton East–Stoney Creek, York South–Weston, London–Fanshawe and Etobicoke North.

On the member from Thornhill's comments, I just want to encourage him to read some of the members who are seeking the leadership to see their positions on EI and what they would like to see changed at the federal level as well. I would encourage you to take the time to do that. With regard to the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek, I want to thank you for the work you have

done and will continue to do on behalf of all workers in the province of Ontario. To the members for York South–Weston, London–Fanshawe and Etobicoke North, we have the honour and privilege of being in the government and speaking on behalf of the McGuinty government.

Today this motion, for me, recognizes that there has been work done, but we want to ensure that what we put in place is not a duplication, an added burden for the businesses, but is respectful of a worker's ability to collect wages. There isn't a soul in this House who would deny a worker the wages that are owed for a hard day's work. All members in the House understand that that money is owed and it is due, and we must ensure the ability of all Ontarians to receive the money that is owed to them.

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I look forward to hearing from members from across the way what they have to say in the future about the rights of Ontario workers. I know they believe that workers must be paid. What they're paid is where we can get into some arguments, and what is the right level of pay, then, becomes very partisan, and we will speak on that in many more days to come.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for allowing me to bring the motion forward today.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): We will vote on this ballot item in about 100 minutes.

HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENT

Mr. John Yakabuski: I move that, in the opinion of this House, the government of Ontario should amend the Public Transportation and Highway Improvement Act to provide that, when requested by a municipality, the Minister of Transportation shall not refuse to enter into an agreement with that municipality to provide a tax rebate under the Gasoline Tax Act to a municipality for the purpose of constructing, maintaining or—I have the wrong—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): We'll just take a moment, and we'll give you the proper notice. Go ahead.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Pardon me, Mr. Speaker.

I move that, in the opinion of this House, the government of Ontario should amend the Public Transportation and Highway Improvement Act to provide that, when requested by a municipality, the Minister of Transportation shall not refuse to enter into an agreement with that municipality to provide a tax rebate under the Gasoline Tax Act to that municipality for a purpose related to public highways under the jurisdiction of that municipality.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Mr. Yakabuski moves private member's notice of motion number 89. Pursuant to standing order 98, Mr. Yakabuski, you have up to 12 minutes for your presentation.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate that opportunity, and I'm glad I caught that motion before I finished reading it.

Interjection.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Yeah, whatever. Thank you to the member from Halton.

This is very interesting. This is a fundamental issue of fairness, and currently the government of Ontario rebates the provincial portion of the gasoline tax, which is 14.7 cents per litre, to municipalities that have a public transportation system in operation in their community. But they prohibit or leave off the municipalities—they freeze out the municipalities that do not have a public transportation system operating within their borders. So, to me, it's a fundamental issue of fairness.

It's interesting that the member for Huron–Bruce, in her windup, talked about EI. She talked about what the Premier has been going on about. She didn't mention the Premier, but we know the Premier has been waxing on about what he sees as the inequity in the way Ontario is treated—"mistreated," he says—under the Employment Insurance system. He says Ontario is being discriminated against. He wants the federal government to treat Ontario the same as other provinces. He doesn't like discrimination. Those are Dalton McGuinty's paraphrased words.

Well, I don't like discrimination either, but the Premier speaks out of two sides of his mouth on the issue, because on the one hand, he says he stands against discrimination when it comes to the federal EI program, but on the other hand, he is in favour of discrimination when it comes to withholding that gasoline tax from rural municipalities. You can't square the two, I say to the Premier, and I say the same thing to the member for Huron–Bruce. You cannot square those two positions. You either are opposed to discrimination or you support it. You can't have it both ways. And what is happening in Ontario today with respect to gasoline tax for rural municipalities is discrimination, plain and simple—14.7 cents per litre.

The Minister of Natural Resources is here today, and I'm glad to see her. She has been in my riding. She knows something of the scope of it; she knows the size and the distances between communities. I remember making that drive with her from up north to Stonecliffe, back down to Pembroke and wherever you had to go after that. Minister, you know it was a busy day. Do you know how long the travel was? Well, that's what people in my riding have to travel every day. It's not just my riding but every rural member's riding. They all encounter the same issues.

I was talking to the member for Haldimand–Norfolk the other day, and not a single community in his riding gets a single cent of gas tax from the provincial government. That is wrong.

As I said to the Minister of Natural Resources, she knows the distances. In Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke and in other rural communities, families sometimes have to have two vehicles, because if they're both working, the chances of them working in the same business or at the same time on the same shift are remote. They need to be able to get to work or they can't support their families.

On this issue of the tax, they pay an inherently disproportionate amount of that tax, because the more miles you drive—and if you're from rural Ontario, you've got to drive miles or kilometres, call them what you want, but you've got to drive a lot of them, and for each of those, you burn fuel. Every time you burn fuel, you've got to fill it up, and every time you fill it up, you've got to pay for it—except we're not getting any of it back, not a fair share of it, and that is fundamentally wrong.

We're not even talking about the 8% that Dalton McGuinty wants to add to the costs of those rural people. For every kilometre they have to drive, every litre of gas they have to buy, another 8% is going to be added on, effective July 1, 2010. That's wrong again. We've got two wrongs. Are they going to try to make a right out of that? It's not going to work. People in rural Ontario won't buy that.

They don't have the option of hopping on the subway, the TTC buses or whatever. They don't have the option. I've got two communities in my riding that receive some gas tax from the province: the city of Pembroke and the town of Renfrew. The city of Pembroke receives from the provincial government the grand sum of \$115,120 and the town of Renfrew receives \$185,237.

They want to talk about the federal government, so let's see what the federal government gives communities in my riding of Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke as their share of the gas tax. Let's see. We'll start with Admaston Bromley. The federal government, Mr. Speaker, I will tell you, doubled their contribution this year to those rural communities. They doubled their contribution because they recognize what a challenge it is trying to get municipal infrastructure built and maintained in rural communities.

This government is so citified, it is so city-centric, that it won't help out those rural communities in a fair way. I know that the member for Manitoulin, who has spoken before on this in the past, is going to say that there are other government programs. There can still be other government programs. Don't tell me that you're restricted to this. Here we've got Michael Bryant the other day all of a sudden finding the secret drawer in Dwight Duncan's desk and finding \$2 billion in the secret drawer. If they want money, they can come up with it. For whatever political purpose that suits their gain, they will find the money, but when it's about rural fairness they can't seem to come up with it.

Just the other day, I had to chastise the Minister of Education for coming up with \$15 million for Toronto school boards to support swimming pools. We can't even get our kids to school. They're cutting back \$1 million on bus transportation in my riding. You can't even get kids to school. They're cutting the funding there. Until this minister comes up with a fair funding formula for rural schools, this problem is only going to get worse.

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This is a fundamental issue of fairness. How this government can stand there and continue to do nothing about it while the federal government has at least recognized—

and let me get back to that: Admaston/Bromley, \$91,761; Arnprior, \$233,691; Bonnechere Valley, \$116,683; Brudenell, Lyndoch and Raglan, \$50,000—I'll just round them up; Deep River, \$135,000; Greater Madawaska, \$75,000; Head, Clara and Maria, \$8,000; Horton township, \$83,000; Killaloe, Hagarty and Richards, \$81,000; Laurentian Hills, \$90,000; Laurentian Valley, \$284,000; Madawaska Valley, \$143,000; McNab/Braeside, \$222,000; and North Algona Wilberforce, \$89,000. Pembroke, from the province, \$115,120—they have a small bus system—but from the feds, \$877,000. Peta-wawa, \$468,000. Renfrew county, from the province, zero; from the federal government, \$2,638,605. The town of Renfrew, \$185,000 from the province; \$258,000 from the feds. One more to come here, and that is Whitewater Region: nothing from the province; \$211,855 from the federal government.

That is how the federal government has addressed the problem of rural funding, and they're not even responsible for transportation. But they take care of rural communities. This government discriminates, without exception. Except where there's a small transportation system, they discriminate against rural communities. As I said earlier this year, they can come up with the money for Toronto swimming pools, but no money for transportation for school boards in Renfrew county.

I know they're going to talk about the MIII. I know they're going to talk about infrastructure programs. There is nothing to stop them from continuing with those, but those are nothing but a crap shoot. Those are a lottery.

Interjections.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Not everybody gets them, I say to the member from Manitoulin, and you know it. They are not sustainable, and you cannot account for them; you cannot plan for them. But in the case of gas tax funding, which the federal government doubled this year, you can count on it, and rural communities across this province need to be able to have a form of sustainable funding that they know is going to be there. Under this program with the provincial government, they don't know what's going to be there. You've got to put your name in; you've got to do the application. You've got to spend thousands of dollars to do an application, and at the end of the day you might get the letter from the ministry saying, "Too bad, so sad; not this time." That's not good enough. We need sustainable funding in rural communities. I've got rural communities from all across the province supporting this, which was a bill.

I'm going to shift gears for just one second and catch my breath. I'm going to say thank you to the government House leader and I'm going to say thank you to the House leader of the NDP, because I tried to reintroduce this as a bill, like it was introduced in the past, and I was ruled out of order. But I will say thank you to the government House Leader for allowing unanimous consent to allow us even to debate this today. So to some degree I say it was magnanimous of her, and I do appreciate it. We're having the opportunity to debate, and I appreciate that. But the question is, will they support it? Will they

support fairness in gas tax funding for rural communities here in the province of Ontario? Mr. Speaker, that is the question, and I know you'll be putting it to them shortly.

Interjections.

Mr. John Yakabuski: We're trying to put it to them, but you'll be putting the question to them.

I know that I have other members who are here today to support this. I hope the members on the other side—and I'm not trying to lecture you. You know that. I'm not that type. I'm just trying—I'm frustrated. I'm trying to appeal to your compassion and your sense of fairness today: Do not forget the rural people in this province. They are struggling greatly. When the province struggles, our rural people struggle even more, because they have to spend so much more of their income on essentials. In Renfrew county, take out Atomic Energy of Canada and Base Petawawa and people live on very low incomes. Please give them a hand.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Wow. Speaker, how do you follow that, eh? Really, it is very difficult. Even when I disagree with the honourable member, I have to say he has the best set of leather lungs in this Legislature, and you can even, at times—those on television can't see this, but you can see faint vibration of metal and wood around the chamber as he gets into it in full flight.

This motion needs a little bit of decoding for those who think it might be about swimming pools, because swimming pools are an issue. That's another part of what life is dealing with today. My understanding—and I'm sure that, sotto voce or full bellow, I will be informed whether I'm right or wrong—is that this would require the Ministry of Transportation to provide a gas tax rebate to municipalities not only for public transit, but also for roads, bridges and highways.

A nodding of the head was seen in the direction of the member who put forward the motion, and I'm going to assume, then, that my interpretation of the motion is correct. I appreciate that.

People need to know that Mr. Yakabuski has been fighting this battle for years and clearly has built up a good head of steam in the course of those battles. Indeed, he introduced a bill to this effect in 2005 and has not stopped since. The point has been put strongly each time it has been raised.

There's an equity dimension—and people heard about the fairness and equity dimension for the last few minutes—to the argument that's made, and not all municipalities have public transit systems; that's true. There's a certain size and density that you need before a transit system will make sense. So the question that's been put on the floor before us is whether it's fair that residents of municipalities without transit systems see their gas tax money going to other municipalities that do have transit systems. I would say, frankly and emphatically, yes, it is fair, just as all other revenue that goes into provincial coffers is distributed according to the needs of the province now—sorry, I should correct that. “According to the

needs of the province” assumes a detached air of accounting that doesn't exist. It's allocated politically, roughly following the political powers of the different communities and interests in the province. I think, however, that it makes sense for this province to continue putting money into municipal transit.

I'll note this again, but I want to note it right up front. Previously, under Conservative, Liberal and NDP administrations, public transit in this province was funded at 50% of operating costs coming from the provincial government. That ended in the late 1990s with one Conservative regime, and what has happened since 2003 is a small return of some of the cash necessary to make those transit systems work. So about a third of transit costs are now covered by the province, not the half that used to be there. You actually need the half to make sure that cities function properly. That's what we need. A suggestion that we would further reduce the amount of money that goes to transit systems in terms of the economy of this province is not a good idea.

One of the purposes of taxation systems is to fund programs that serve the common public good, and that's whether or not every individual or every region in a province utilizes the services that are produced. For instance, air ambulance is something that is needed throughout the north, throughout large areas of the province where you have low density. I have no argument with that at all. You don't need air ambulance in the GTA or in Ottawa; they are served by a large number of hospitals and the distances are much smaller. I think it would be wrong for us not to have that level of service in the north. I don't mind the fact that my taxes go to pay for it. In fact, the travel allowance that is given to northern residents has been outlined to me by people in the north, and it's clearly not adequate for their purposes. There should be more there, and I think people here who are from the north can speak to that far more eloquently than I can.

Different parts of the province have different needs. One of the investments that makes a huge difference to our society as a whole is an investment in public transit. Even if a person never steps on a bus or steps on a subway system, they benefit from the fact that having transit systems in place reduces the volume of car traffic and the level of air pollution that people are subjected to.

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I have been in Kingston—I have been north of Kingston in midsummer, when people have had to breathe the smog that blankets all of southern Ontario. Some of that is from coal-fired plants; some of that is from natural gas. A big chunk of it is from cars. The more people we get out of cars and onto transit, the less smog. If you're in rural Ontario, you're breathing that junk just as sure as if you are down here in this Legislature. Investment in transit in Ottawa, Hamilton, Windsor, London, Toronto, Kingston—in all those cities—means cleaner air and better health for rural Ontario and urban Ontario.

Air pollution in Ontario causes at least 2,000 premature deaths each year and costs \$10 billion in eco-

conomic costs each year—\$10 billion. That's a cost that is borne by the whole province. So investments to reduce that air pollution, to reduce the mortality and to reduce health costs are of great consequence to every person in this province.

Public transit reduces greenhouse gas emissions. The north is going to be hit much harder by climate change than the south—more forest fires. Farmers—rural areas dependent on regular, predictable rainfall for crops—are going to be hit hard. Rural Ontario has a huge stake in the outcome of real action on climate change, and if you're going to take real action on climate change, you have to have investment in public transit, and that investment has to be at a level that makes it viable and attractive. So we have a question here of making investments in different parts of the province that benefit the whole province.

Getting people out of private vehicles and onto public transit reduces motor vehicle crashes, which kill about 3,000 Canadians a year and cost the Canadian economy about \$1.7 billion a year. Very straightforwardly, we're about 40% of Canada's population. So we're somewhere in the \$800-million or \$900-million-a-year range for health care costs arising from motor vehicle crashes. Again, since we don't say we'll spend less in rural areas for health care than we spend in urban areas—although I know that very often that is the way it's been working out in reality—the principle is not applied the way it needs to be, and it needs to be corrected. And if that motion were on the table, I would be giving a very different speech. The reality, though, is that health care costs are shared across the province, and to the extent that we reduce the number of people who are injured in car crashes, we'll reduce the overall burden of health care costs in this province.

Investing in places where we can get people out of their cars and into transit makes sense for the province as a whole. In smaller communities, transit can play an important role helping local businesses, helping commuters get to work and bringing shoppers to stores.

It was interesting: About a year ago, I was talking to a friend of mine who drives a bus in London. Now, London is a city that doesn't have a very big transit system—it isn't a very frequent service, in my experience, honourable member. Having grown up in Hamilton, I really enjoyed the transit system when I got to Toronto. It was just a lot more frequent. My friend, however, was driving a bus in London, and talked about how they changed his route so he had to stop in a shopping mall. Initially, the business owners in the shopping mall weren't enthused about it, but he found that he was carrying a lot more passengers into that mall and out of that mall. He was increasing the overall traffic, the overall trade, to their advantage, and the people who weren't having to spend money on gasoline and insurance for their cars, and paid much less for transit, were able to spend that money in those stores. There's an advantage to us to have more people with money in their pockets because they can rely on transit rather than having to spend a lot on owning and operating a car.

There are 89 municipal transit systems serving 111 municipalities in Ontario: towns like Elliott Lake, Leamington and Lindsay. For us as a province, there is a tremendous advantage to investment in public transit. It's good for our health, our environment, our quality of life and our communities.

This government, frankly, could do a lot more to support public transit. As I said at the beginning of my speech, the government of Ontario once paid half of transit operating costs and now pays less than a third. In its most recent budget, the McGuinty government once again allocated more money to new highways than it did to public transit. There is an awful lot more to be done to actually re-jig that balance of investment in transportation dollars so that the investments we do make improve our health status, reduce air pollution, reduce greenhouse gas impacts and, in fact, make our cities more livable.

I've listened to the member from Renfrew, who makes a very strong argument. I disagree with him. I think taking money away from transit and putting it into roads, bridges and highways is not the right direction to go. I have to say this, though: Rural Ontario is in deep trouble. I think the speech that's been made by the member shows the extent to which rural Ontario has been dealt a bad hand. That needs to be corrected, because I heard it when we did the Clean Water Act hearings. I disagreed with the arguments people were making but I understood emotionally where they were coming from. They're seeing their way of life being drawn away from them with depopulation and reduction in incomes. Those things have to be addressed in this province because there is a rural anger out there that, if not addressed, will shred the fabric of this province. It needs to be addressed. I disagree with this particular approach, but not with the fundamental argument about the need for a fair deal for rural Ontario. Thank you, member, for bringing this forward.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mrs. Linda Jeffrey: I appreciated the rant that the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke brought to the table, and his passion, but I think a little context always helps, and I thought I'd bring context from my own community.

By the year 2031, the city of Brampton is expected to reach a population of 680,000 people; a home to more than 290,000 jobs. I think the resolution that we've heard put forward today would jeopardize my community's plans to successfully manage the growth and the transportation needs of such a large city.

In Brampton, to respond to those needs and the growth that we've all heard about, we've prepared a transportation and transit master plan. The plan reinforces the urgent need to implement an accessible, attractive and viable alternative to the private automobile. To this end, the city of Brampton proposed a Brampton Rapid Transit initiative, which we fondly call AcceleRide, to improve transit service in the high-demand corridors, to encourage and increase commuter traffic and use of transit and more

effective use of Brampton Transit to other transit networks across the GTA. The key to all successful implementations of any transit network—and certainly in Brampton—is a meaningful relationship and a partnership with a senior level of government.

In March 2006, our government announced a \$95-million commitment to the city's AcceleRide program as part of our budget. I was thrilled by the announcement. I think on Wednesday we announced it in our budget, and by Friday Mayor Fennell already had the money and it was in the bank. We had already put our third forward in order to successfully implement this AcceleRide program in Brampton. The city committed to putting its one third forward; we're still waiting for the feds to put forward their amount. They've made many announcements but the money hasn't actually been there. The city of Brampton has put \$2.4 million in the bank, including hiring additional staff. The first phase of the AcceleRide program involves some branded and enhanced service on Queen Street and Main Street connecting us to Vaughan.

The reason government provides gas tax to mass transit systems is to get the vehicles off the road, to reduce our emissions and to make sure the infrastructure of mass transit service systems serve all of Ontario. We've made it a priority to invest in public transit. We're back in the business of public transit systems, and that's important. Municipalities have indicated that an ongoing, predictable funding source is a top priority for moving public transit. Providing two cents of gas transit revenues is a key example of our commitment to improving public transit in the GTA and across Ontario.

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I find this resolution to be problematic because it takes money away from mass transportation systems. The two cents of gas tax applies to all of Ontario, so if you take some of that money away to do other things across Ontario, you're going to reduce the funding to mass transit in the larger cities and larger communities that provide that mass transit.

When I am here in Toronto I hear the need—and certainly in Peel, there are appeals for more money for mass transit so we can reduce emissions, reduce the wear and tear on our roads and get our people moving. So although I appreciate the passion of the member, in my community you need to fund the mass transit. We have almost a million people there and you need to fund those transit priorities.

I think there are unintended consequences of this resolution. Although I appreciate its passion, I am unable to support this resolution.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Ted Arnott: I'm glad to have this chance this afternoon to speak in support of my colleague the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke and his resolution which he's brought forward today: "That, in the opinion of this House, the government of Ontario should amend the Public Transportation and Highway Improvement Act to provide that, when requested by a municipality, the

Minister of Transportation shall not refuse to enter into an agreement with that municipality to provide a tax rebate under the Gasoline Tax Act to a municipality for the purpose of constructing, maintaining or operating a rapid transit or public transportation system." Translating that—

Mr. John Yakabuski: That's the wrong resolution.

Mr. Ted Arnott: That's the wrong one?

Mr. John Yakabuski: Read it on orders of the day.

Mr. Ted Arnott: Well, that's what I've got in front of me.

But essentially what the member is advocating, as I understand it, is to allow the rural municipalities of the province of Ontario to access some of the provincial gasoline tax. Right now, as we know, the provincial government shares a small portion of the 14.7-cents-a-litre gasoline tax that people pay when they buy gasoline with municipalities that operate transit systems. Of course, those tend to be the cities, or perhaps the larger towns in some cases. But as we know, rural Ontario is excluded from this predictable stream of funding, by and large. A vast majority of rural municipalities are excluded from this particular stream of funding, which makes it very difficult for them to plan their infrastructure projects.

I support what the member is saying. I want to suggest that he deserves credit for his persistence on this issue. He has brought it forward on a number of occasions in the House. I've certainly expressed support. In fact, I have presented petitions in this Legislature on this very issue, and I think that people in my riding are very concerned about it and see it as a matter of fundamental unfairness.

Listening to the government members opposite with their explanation of the situation, unfortunately they seem to be willing to pit the cities against the small towns with respect to this debate; to suggest that if the small towns and the rural areas of the province get anything in terms of the gas tax, it's going to be taken away from the big cities such that they won't be able to maintain and operate their transit systems. I don't believe that to be the case. I certainly recognize and understand that our urban communities in Ontario need public transit, and I support that. I support expanded GO Transit service and GO train service to my constituents in Wellington–Halton Hills and have spoken out on that on many occasions. But at the same time, I'm well aware of the infrastructure needs that exist in the communities in Wellington–Halton Hills. I know that each member of this House who represents a rural riding should be aware of the huge infrastructure deficit that exists in their communities.

Just last week, the municipalities in Wellington–Halton Hills and, I believe, across the province had a deadline to submit their applications for the Building Canada fund and the stimulus fund, which is a joint federal and provincial program, those two programs together, in an effort to build infrastructure to kick-start our economy. All of the communities in my riding identified their needs. I could go into it as great length. I know that the county of Wellington wants to build a new Centre

Wellington police operation centre and a new county archives. I've written the Premier to express my strong support for those projects. Certainly, the region of Halton has a significant list of projects as well: the Skyway waste water treatment plant and the southwest treatment plant; key transportation projects, Tremaine Road and Upper Middle Road—I guess that's most likely in Oakville; development of employment lands, the 401-Halton Hills corridor that includes our riding of Wellington-Halton Hills, the Milton business park and Winston Park as well as a number of other projects.

Our local communities have a huge list of projects that they have put forward. Again, this underlines the need for infrastructure funding from the senior levels of government, but I take this opportunity to express my strong support for all of our applications that are coming from Wellington-Halton Hills. I know they've been carefully reviewed. The ideas have been thoroughly vetted by the municipal councils and the staffs, and I have absolute confidence in the local municipal councils and the staffs in my riding. I'm privileged to work with them. I'm privileged to call them colleagues. They do an extraordinarily good job on behalf of their constituents.

Very briefly, I know that the township of Guelph-Eramosa is seeking assistance to reconstruct 7.8 kilometres of Jones Baseline between County Road 124 and 22.

Puslinch township is seeking assistance for a new municipal storage building at the municipal complex. They're also looking for assistance under the Building Canada Intake 2 for the reconstruction and paving of Concession Road 7 in the township.

I know that Centre Wellington is looking at the need for assistance for replacement of the Forfar Street water tower, the reconstruction of Church Street in Elora, and the reconstruction of Sideroad 19, Burnett Court and Victoria Crescent. As well, under the Building Canada program, they have identified the need for a big, expensive project but certainly a well-needed project: the Elora waste water treatment plant upgrades. It's a \$15.6-million project, hopefully split three ways.

Interjection: Where is that located?

Mr. Ted Arnott: That's in Elora, in Centre Wellington township. We certainly need the support of the provincial government with that one.

I'm pleased to outline the needs in Halton Hills. We have the need for assistance to twin the Acton arena under the communities component of the Building Canada fund. As well, under the stimulus program, there is a need for assistance for the Acton branch library replacement; the Georgetown arterial road reconstruction—Delrex Boulevard and Sinclair Avenue; and the rehabilitation of rural surface treated roads to asphalt.

Those are a number of the projects that I believe need to be funded by the provincial government. I also know that if the government were to listen to the member for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke in this regard and bring forward a program in response to his resolution so as to allow our rural communities to access some of this gas

tax money, they would be able—in my community, certainly—to take a very good stab at this significant list of infrastructure projects that are needed. I know that they could move forward on them more quickly and build more of them. I think it's important to point that out today.

Again, I would suggest to all members of this House, particularly the rural ones—there are a number of rural MPPs who are here on a Thursday afternoon to listen to this debate. I hope that they will support the member for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke. His speech today was excellent. He's a vocal, outspoken and articulate spokesman for rural Ontario, and he deserves enormous credit for bringing forward this resolution. I salute him, and I urge all members of this House to support his resolution this afternoon.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mrs. Carol Mitchell: I'm very pleased to enter the debate today. I do want to be up front that I will not be supporting this motion.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Oh.

Mrs. Carol Mitchell: I know that the member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke will want to know why. I entered the debate the last time, when you brought it forward as a private member's bill, and today, when it is a motion.

I want to talk specifically about one of the smallest municipalities that I have in my riding. It's called the municipality of South Bruce. They received \$78,000 in gas tax in 2007; in 2008 they received \$98,000; and in 2009, \$197,000. I want to give a sense of where the municipality is at today. They need a new bridge. How many years would it take them to save for that bridge? Ten years? Nine years? They would be saving so long for a bridge, if that was the funding they received for infrastructure, that they would never, ever catch up. They would think that the previous government was back in government again. The municipality of South Bruce just received \$19.5 million for sewage. If they received only gas tax for funding, they would have to save for 100 years to pay for the same work that they're getting.

The members from across the way will tell you that rural Ontario is not getting its fair share of infrastructure dollars. They're simply wrong. My riding, the most beautiful riding in the province of Ontario, Huron-Bruce, received \$56 million in the last fiscal year alone. Do you want me to tell you what happened when the previous government was in? They downloaded \$40 million to the county of Huron alone, and we also had the county of Bruce.

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I know that we're on a "spend" day today from the members across the way. We're on a "spend" day today; I understand that. Tomorrow we'll be on a "cut" day, but today we're on a "spend" day—and for the member from Wellington-Halton Hills to stand up and give his list of what he wants to see happen, when he sat in the previous government and cut, cut, cut, because those were "cut"

days, but today we're having a "spend" day from the members across the way.

They'll also vote against the budget; I know they will—\$32 billion invested in infrastructure over two years, and then you'll say, "Well, that's the federal government. They're putting all their money in," and they are putting some money in. Of the \$32 billion, they're putting in \$5 billion. That's their contribution. Then in the same breath they'll argue, "You should do what the federal government does now for the rural municipalities." Well, we're doing far more than that. Look at my little municipality of South Bruce—\$19 million. You would subject my community to living with inadequate sewage capacity for another 100 years if your program came forward. I say to the member from Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke that that's not good enough for me. That's not good enough for my people. I know that you will vote against \$32 billion and I say that's inappropriate. Roads and bridges funding, MIII, RIII: You guys have never seen the investments and you're all out there for the photo ops, you're all out there to cut your ribbon and you're all out there to bring your list forward, but by the same token you'll vote against that \$32 billion.

I say, come clean, tell us where you're going to cut if you form government again, and then my people will know the story. Thank you for allowing me to enter the debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: I think this motion is all about fairness. What he talks about here is that, "in the opinion of this House, the government of Ontario should amend the Public Transportation and Highway Improvement Act to provide that, when requested by a municipality, the Minister of Transportation shall not refuse to enter into an agreement with that municipality to provide a tax rebate under the Gasoline Tax Act to that municipality for a purpose related to public highways under the jurisdiction of that municipality." It's a reasonable resolution, a reasonable request.

The member also has a bill before the House that talks to the same issue. But here we have in Ontario two classes of citizens, two classes of municipalities: one that qualifies for a very specific grant dealing with, albeit public transportation, but it deals with the basis of transportation. On the other hand we have a number of municipalities in Ontario that don't have a system of public transportation within their municipalities, and they are excluded from this rebate. People in the excluded municipalities still require transportation. They provide it themselves, and that transportation should have the right to the same access to funds that the municipality with public transportation has in their grasp. So I think this whole resolution, this whole program, is one that looks at the fairness of treating Ontarians on a level playing field.

It isn't just in transportation that this exists. This exists in other parts of our society as well, and I find it particularly interesting and upsetting, perhaps, that it occurs in the town of Milton. Milton, of course, is the fastest-growing town in Ontario. It's growing at a rate that puts

it as—this is interesting—the fastest-growing town of its size in the world. It grew about 15,000 people in the last two years. My riding, which includes Milton, has in excess of 200,000 people in it. Most ridings are in about 100,000; 107,000; 110,000. My riding has well in excess of that. I think it is about 220,000, but it's difficult to keep up because it's growing so quickly.

The province of Ontario funds certain things, certain administrative things, in hospitals, in municipalities, on the basis of census figures. The last census figure for Milton—Milton had census figures, I think, of 29,000 or close to 30,000, and here we are servicing currently 75,000, 80,000 people in Milton. Miltonians are being short-serviced by that amount from the population census, and that makes it very unfair.

The system of funding certain programs and health care in Ontario municipalities based on census population figures works well for perhaps 90% of Ontario, perhaps 85% of Ontario. That program works well; that system works well. But when you get areas of high growth, it is distorted and it doesn't work well, and the gasoline tax and the rebate system add to the distortion of what is fair for all Ontarians.

It's very important that when we're dealing with Ontarians, whether it be in Moosonee, Kenora, Cornwall, downtown Toronto or any of the small towns—whether we're talking about the Teeswaters of Ontario or the medium-sized Guelphs or Chatham-sized towns—I think all of those towns have to be treated in an equal way with respect to their own needs and their own desires, as opposed to being dictated to from a central source at Queen's Park. People in the country, of course, refer to it as Toronto, but it's Queen's Park that is dictating the fact that Ontarians are treated differently in different communities, and I think that's inherently wrong.

I'll be pleased to support this member's motion and—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Thank you. Further debate?

Mr. Michael A. Brown: Just briefly to the member for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke—and a good friend: He would be wanting to go back to all of those municipalities that he represents in his very fine riding and explaining to them that they can access this money. What they need to do is provide disability transportation within their communities, and they can access the money to do that. He would know that I have a number of communities in my constituency that do not operate mass transit systems and that feel that they have some reason to look after their folks with disabilities and make sure that they can go where they need to go, such as appointments. You can do that through this program if those municipalities choose to do it. So I know he would want to go back to his municipalities and say to them, "If you care about your people with disabilities, you can get the money, and this is how you do it."

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mrs. Liz Sandals: I will be opposing this motion, so I will be up front about that, just as I opposed Bill 38, which the member previously put forward.

I support the gas tax and I support it going to public transit, because I share our government's commitment to public transit. In fact, we've invested \$17.4 billion in public transit since we came into office in 2003, and what we're seeing as a result of that is increased ridership and improved service, and I'm very proud of that.

We delivered on our commitment to provide two cents per litre of provincial gas tax revenues to municipalities. I am fortunate that Guelph, in fact, is one of the municipalities that receives that money. To date, Guelph has received \$11.3 million from this fund, and it's gone to very good use.

People who have ever used public transit in Guelph will know that, traditionally, it was like a daisy: Everything met in the middle. What we've done with the gas tax money is introduced ring routes around the outside of the petals, and that's meant a huge improvement for people who are trying to get around by bus in Guelph. We've also been able to increase the frequency of the service, and again, that's made a huge difference in Guelph—very much appreciated.

1510

But the member from Renfrew has been talking about the fundamental issue of fairness. I think I disagree about what's fair, because the member from Renfrew left a piece of the story out. What the member from Renfrew didn't mention is that this government has a lot of programs for which only rural municipalities qualify.

Guelph is now over 100,000 people. That means we are not rural, and I don't complain about that; we're clearly not rural. But because we're not rural, we can't qualify for COMRIF; the member's municipalities can. We can't qualify for RED, rural economic development; the rural members can. My municipality doesn't get what's called OMPF any more, the Ontario municipal partnership fund. His municipalities can. In fact, if you look at his municipalities, when you look at just the roads and bridges portion of stuff they can qualify for that my municipality can't, they have received \$21 million from this government. That's double what my municipality got from the gas tax.

So I agree that there's a fundamental issue of fairness. It means that urban and rural both have their needs met, but it—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Thank you.

The honourable member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke has up to two minutes for his response.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I thank the members from Toronto–Danforth, Huron–Bruce, Wellington–Halton Hills, Brampton–Springdale, Halton, Algoma–Manitoulin and Guelph for their comments. I just want to touch on a couple of the points because I want to clarify something.

To the member from Toronto–Danforth, I want to make one thing perfectly clear: Never once have we ever talked about reducing the funding for public transportation as a result of this. This is about a fair share of gas tax. This is a \$109-billion budget this government is putting out. Michael Bryant can find \$2 billion extra in Dwight Duncan's extra pair of pants, for God's sake; we

can find the money to fund public transportation. And for the members to impute that this is the only funding, then, that rural municipalities would be getting is absolutely preposterous. What the member for Huron–Bruce said—for goodness sake, the federal government gives gas tax. It also participates in infrastructure funding—billions of dollars. For them to make that kind of connection is ridiculous. There is more than one way to do it, as the member for Guelph has said.

What we're saying is, you fairly share the gas tax and we still deal with those issues. But we do not have, then, the totally inequitable situation of giving gas tax that is collected from rural people, taken out of rural people's pockets, and given to people who don't even drive cars. This is something that is absolutely wrong. So for them to try to equate those two things is preposterous at its outset and I'm trying to clarify that. Toronto is not limited to gas tax funding for transportation infrastructure. Toronto gets billions of dollars of funding over and above gas tax from the provincial share.

Their arguments are wrong. This is an issue of fairness. This is an issue of sharing the gas tax equally among those people who pay it, and it's time for them to do something fair in this government.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): We'll vote on Mr. Yakabuski's ballot item in about 50 minutes.

NEWS MEDIA

Mr. Michael A. Brown: I move that, in the opinion of this House, local news sources such as radio, television and newspapers are important to maintaining thriving, vibrant communities, and deserve assistance if needed from the government of Canada, and all members of the community, to remain viable through the current global economic situation.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Mr. Brown moves private member's notice of motion number 88. Pursuant to standing order 98, the honourable member has up to 12 minutes for his presentation.

Mr. Michael A. Brown: I think today this is an important resolution. It calls on not just the government of Canada but all people and all governments at all levels to do what they can to bolster local news media coverage.

When I came here back in 1987, in my constituency, which was much smaller in those days, there were three radio stations operated by Huron Broadcasting. One was in Elliot Lake. There was a fellow by the name of Phil Dunn who was one of the news people; Rocco Frangione was there, and several others. There were people in Blind River at the radio station. There was Jack Reid and Roz Raby, who was on the radio station in Espanola.

Now there is but one of those. The Moose, as it's called, is a chain of radio stations. They do very good work, but they have one reporter in the entire area: Kyle Duggan, who does a great job, but he's on from 6 in the morning until noon. That is it as far as local news goes. On the weekend you get repeats out of the network. You cannot really know what's going on in the community.

We've looked at our television stations. The folks I represent would watch television stations from Sault Ste. Marie, from Sudbury, from Timmins and other parts of the constituency. Back a few years ago, MCTV, the operator, had local anchor desks in each of those communities. It's all been consolidated to one. It all comes out of Sudbury. There are reporters in the other communities, but I would tell you, there is not as much local news through the area as there once was. I would also tell you that they recently eliminated the morning five minutes they would insert into Canada AM every morning, so that's no more.

Our venerable broadcaster, CBC, the public voice of Canadians or whatever they call themselves, has recently reduced their northern services dramatically in the Sudbury area and, I presume, Thunder Bay also and across the province.

What I'm saying, or what I am trying to say, is that we need good local news sources for good, strong, vibrant local communities. We can't rely on CNN or Fox or even Newsworld or Newsnet to make our local communities pull together.

We do have one strong component in my constituency of local news, and that is our weekly newspapers. I want to spend just a minute or two talking about the fine job that people do from Manitouwadge through to Manitoulin providing weekly newspapers that are first-rate. Rick McCutcheon of the Manitoulin Expositor and the Manitoulin West Recorder and his editors, Tom Sasvari from the Recorder and Jim Moodie from the Expositor, and all their fine staff produce some of the finest weekly papers in small markets that I know of.

Roz Raby—you probably just heard me speak about her earlier in the radio—now is the editor of the Mid-North Monitor. Kevin McSheffrey and Shannon Quesnel in Elliot Lake do a fine job of their local newspapers, but they're weeklies. Brent Rankin of the North Shore Sentinel and his staff do a wonderful job. We look up to the Chapleau Express, Mario and his gang, Tammy and her gang from the Algoma News, and even Scott and Bunny at the Echo do a great job of bringing local news to local people. But it's once a week. It's once a week, and even they are feeling the difficulties of a relatively difficult advertising market in maintaining it.

Recently, the federal government, as probably all of us know, has been musing about spending around \$150 million in support of these local community media outlets. Now, I just want to encourage that. That seems to me to be a good idea. They're not quite sure how they want to do that, and I'm not quite sure how they do it either. But I think we all need to be supportive of making sure that our local communities have a good local voice.

The second thing I wanted to talk about is what has happened here. In 1987, that press gallery during question period was full.

Interjection: Look at it now.

Mr. Michael A. Brown: There is not a soul in it today.

Interjection.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: They're listening.

Mr. Michael A. Brown: I know they are. But there was television then, in the Stone Age, Peter. I think we had a rather exciting day here for question period; I think there were five or six. The press gallery in this place has dropped. There used to be reporters here from the Windsor Star, the London Free Press—a host of local dailies had people here. They weren't just part of a chain; they had their own people here. We just lost Murray Campbell, from the Globe and Mail; one of the best sources of commentary, I think, around this place, Murray was. He's now gone. The Globe and Mail, Canada's newspaper, has but one reporter here at Queen's Park. We don't have that kind of local influence. If a northern member stood up and talked about something from the north, there would be somebody up there that connected directly with it and they knew it was important. They knew it was important that they should cover that, get that information back out to Thunder Bay or Timmins or Gore Bay or Elliot Lake or wherever it needed to be because they understood, they were from there, they were from a market that was interested in those issues. So that was really important.

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The gallery has now shrunk. The concentration of media means that many people are doing more than one job. They're reporting for radio, they're reporting in a newspaper and they might even be on TV too. That just is not good for our sense of community, for our sense of understanding, for our sense of making sure that our communities pull together, understand the issues as they come from a local perspective. Some would say, "Well, you know, that's the way the world is: concentration of media, big business rules everything and we don't need those local folks." I'm telling you, we do. I think local newspapers, the weeklies, are the best demonstration of that. I have a note here somewhere that tells me how many we have. We have 300 members of the Ontario Community Newspapers Association. They circulate 4.1 million copies of their papers every week, but more than half of them distribute less than 5,000 copies of their paper. So they are small; they are local. Most of them are owned not by big chains but by small business people. Often it's a labour of love as much as a business. They do a good job of informing their communities about the issues that are important to those communities. We need more of that. We need the support.

For example, if you look at the Toronto Star these days, it's not very thick, is it? Why is that? There's not a whole lot of advertising in it; the Globe and Mail—all the big papers are like that. The small papers are having the same problem, and it gets magnified if your margin isn't that big in the first place.

All I'm urging here is for this House to understand the importance of local media to local people, local communities. I think we can do that if we encourage the federal government to move on what they have been musing about. That's a good thing. If we in the province can continue with cutting the taxes of small business so that

the small newspapers have an opportunity to do better in their markets, or at least keep more of their own money in their own pocket, that's also a good thing. There are some things we are doing that are good things. There's probably more, and hopefully we'll hear some suggestions about that. But I just want people to know that we have to focus more. I think as a northern member you realize that the small communities often are feeling totally disenfranchised. I think Mr. Yakubski's motion just before me may have spoken to that a bit. That's because we don't seem included, and we don't seem included because the local news and the news out of Toronto have a disconnect. Part of that is because we don't have the people in the press gallery or the people across the newspaper operations or the electronic operations that are important.

I would say, though, that the advent of e-news or Internet news is kind of an interesting facet. It has even captured the imagination of parts, at least, of Algoma-Manitoulin. We just want to say to Brenda Grundt, who operates Wawa-news.com in the great municipality of Wawa, that she does interesting stuff there. They even have a wonderful radio station up there owned by Rick Labbé, who serves both Wawa and Chapleau. So we have come into this century. We are doing good things. Many newspapers are now publishing e-editions, but we need to do more. I would just ask the House to consider my resolution favourably. I think it is one that is worthy of support.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Peter Shurman: This is a really interesting motion. Coming, as most members know that I do, from a background of media, both small market and large, for many, many years I've kind of been waiting to debate this on a number of levels, not least of which is the fact that there are a number of motions that we've discussed—last week one on an unfair law in Afghanistan that I think all members of the House could support; this motion brought by the member from Algoma-Manitoulin; the earlier motion by the member from Huron-Bruce—which are motions of really no force and effect other than, if they are passed, to say that the House feels something should happen, and we kick it upstairs to the government of Canada and hope something happens. It probably doesn't, because these things are out of our province. That's number one.

Number two, listening to the member from Algoma-Manitoulin talking about the small markets and the media the way it used to be and comparing it with how it is now brought back early stages of my career when I knew some of the people he was talking about who operated the three radio stations that have now morphed away and turned into one. I have to reassure the member that that is not particular to small markets. I will talk during the course of the next 10 minutes about the changes in media which I think are pervasive in North America, if not indeed the world, and that are changing the face of everything. So this motion is about protecting private for-

profit media, some of the ones, but not all of the ones, that provide us with our local news.

This member is proposing to protect people from losing their local news sources, and it's at some cost by way of bailouts that would come at the federal level. In short, I've got to say I don't think so. I don't think this is going to happen. When I saw the motion, it occurred to me that if this were 500 years ago, the member or somebody like him might say, "There's Mr. Gutenberg printing his Bibles and it looks like new technology is coming along, so we'd better bail him out and protect him so we can print those Bibles for the next 500 years." But that made way for other forms, so the media of that day made way for the media of today. We couldn't save Gutenberg then and we can't save media as we know media now. But smart people in the media business can save themselves and will save themselves, and there are signs of it everywhere.

I respect private members' ideas, in particular this one, and their wish to achieve good through the private members' process, but I've got to tell you that I have spent my life in media, in middle management roles and in some quite senior management positions—I ran one of the biggest radio broadcasting companies in the country, one that encompassed huge stations like CFRB Toronto and smaller, very small, stations. I worked for the likes of Conrad Black—you might know him, a guest of the American government right now—and the legendary Allan Slaight, now retired here in Toronto. We endured some hard times even in those days. But a bailout? The word didn't even exist. These days, that approach comes up constantly, and I sometimes find myself wondering whether this is some kind of buildup of anti-market forces, some kind of a disease.

Competition makes media better and it forces change, and in tougher times it forces change faster and more radically. Marketing positioning makes, for example, the Toronto Star left, the National Post right, the Sun a tabloid picture paper, and the Globe—well, we're not quite sure what the Globe is, but it's there. Competition makes someone, for example, like Ivan Fecan, the big boss at CTV, a fairly good-time Charlie who, along with his network, has lived very well in great times. He can't seem to make a buck now with CTV, so he wants a fee for carriage to be charged with your cable bill. That means you and I get to pay a tax for receiving commercial television programming on cable or satellite. That doesn't sit well with a lot of people, because we're already watching television programs that are paid for and news that's paid for with commercial advertising, and we're being told, "Well, you know, if you're going to save us, you're going to have to contribute six bucks a household through your cable to get that commercial programming."

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Mr. Fecan said recently that he couldn't sell some of CTV's television stations for a dollar—for a dollar—Brandon, Windsor and Wingham television stations, so small-to-medium markets.

Along came Jim Shaw, who bought the three of them for a dollar, because he felt that he could do something with those. He already owned small-market television stations, and he managed to find ways to make them make money—not a lot of money, but enough to keep them in business and provide that news that is so valuable.

What was interesting about it was, after he bought them for a dollar, he took out a full-page ad in several national newspapers last week, and he warned of whiny, good-time private enterprisers now looking for something from the public trough. I'd like to quote from Jim Shaw's ad. He says:

"After being turned down twice, Global TV and CTV are back in Ottawa lobbying hard for a bailout of hundreds of millions of dollars. They call this 'fee for carriage.' Without mincing words, this is a tax. It is a direct tax on you and 10 million Canadian families who are cable or satellite TV subscribers.

"These broadcasters are threatening to cut local newscasts, cut jobs and close television stations. They are holding you hostage demanding a tax on subscribers as the ransom. Fee for carriage will result in a \$6-a-month increase in your cable or satellite bill. That's \$72 more per year.

"Because Canadian consumers would get nothing in return and the broadcasters would make no commitments to sustain local programming, the CRTC has twice rightly denied their demand for fee for carriage."

He continues: "To emphasize their point in front of the commission, CTV offered up their local television stations in Windsor, Brandon and Wingham for \$1 each. We believe television has a bright future; Shaw will take them up on their offer and purchase them."

That's what this entrepreneur did, and I bring that up by way of pointing out that we're not just talking about the Moose being the member's sole radio station in his constituency or weekly papers being the only way to hold something in your hand and read it. We're talking about this at the national level, because this is CTV. We're talking about it in media markets like Windsor, Brandon and Wingham that were basically going to go dark unless somebody came along. Here's an entrepreneur who says, "I will think outside the box. I've done this in other markets, and I'll do it here as well."

I want to assure the member and all members that your local news services are not going anywhere, and no bailout is really required. None should even be remotely contemplated, as a matter of fact, much less with an eye towards Ottawa as the money source. This, to me, is an improper use of taxpayer dollars when you're dealing with private enterprise. That's why they call them private radio stations. This is private enterprise—private newspapers, private enterprise. They have to rethink things.

If you follow the cable TV versus broadcaster feud, it's supposed to be about cable companies making money because cable is a commodity and broadcasters hurting because they sell advertising. My response to that is, isn't it a pity? Start rethinking yourself, because the fact is,

cable is a commodity. That's what it is. Like buying electricity or buying phone service, there's one supplier. You can take it, you can go to satellite or you can stick an antenna on your roof. This is the choice you've got, whereas television, radio, electronic distribution of private signals, is a necessarily for-profit business.

The revenues for broadcasters were not always down; they won't always be down. They never sought to share any of the revenues back when Roy Thompson, who himself was a broadcaster, said, "Having a television licence is a licence to print money." I didn't notice the broadcasters who were printing money in those days handing the cable companies a bunch of money as they were incipient in their start-up mode, and I don't see any reason why that should be turned around now.

We are in a state of great change—really great change—in media. It is at all levels, and it is of all market sizes. In about a thousand years, history is going to talk about this period's shift in terms that are not unlike the way we talk about the Renaissance, the Iron Age or the Industrial Revolution. I don't know what they'll call it. They'll probably call it something like the "communications revolution."

You don't stop change by buying a future for ideas and enterprises whose twilight may have arrived. You look for a shakeout, and the good survive because they come up with new ways to do what they do. News has always been there for the taking. I don't care if it came by a jungle drum, an office grapevine, smoke signals, Pony Express, the office memo, the daily newspaper, then radio and then television. Now we're in a state of mutation, but never have there been so many news sources at the same time. I'm going to the opening, this weekend, of a new Chinese television station that will headquarter in Toronto. It's another Chinese television station, digital, that will serve Canada. I'm involved with one of our leadership candidates here in the Progressive Conservative Party, and the candidate I'm involved with had three different interviews in three different languages today, because what's happening is our country is changing and those media are thriving. They're doing really well, linguistic media that serve particular communities.

We grew up, the people of our generation in Toronto, with something like 1050 CHUM, and now that channel is relegated to rebroadcasting the audio of a television-based rotating news service, CP24. How pitiful and unimaginative is that? There are other ways to do these things.

Here's the deal with media: It doesn't matter how the news gets to us; what matters is that the news does get to us, and there are a lot of ways that people are doing it. Smart media is smart business. If an AM radio station signal happens to be outmoded as a transmission vehicle, it doesn't matter as long as what was on the AM signal gets to you somehow. So if we're dealing with people like my friends Bill Carroll and John Moore on CFRB and nobody wants to listen it on AM anymore, maybe they'll be on FM or maybe they'll go on satellite; maybe they'll wind up distributing audio on the web. Maybe

they'll even put pictures on it, because these days a kid with a thousand dollars' worth of computing equipment can have his own radio station, have his own television station and write his own blog.

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: They need Shurman back.

Mr. Peter Shurman: "They need Shurman back," somebody says. Thank you; I'll take it as a compliment.

But the bottom line on this is that there are more people providing more sources of news in a more imaginative way right now than ever. It's those people who are as smart as we would like to think we were 30 or 40 years ago who are reinventing all of this now. So bailing out the old is not the way to go. Stimulating the new will resolve the problem that the member seeks to address.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Paul Miller: Many of us who grew up in the Hamilton-Halton-Niagara region remember watching the six o'clock news after supper. Our families would gather around the television, a pause in our busy days, and watch CHCH TV reporting the happenings in our community and what was going on in the world around us. Back before Canadian Idol or So You Think You Can Dance, families would gather around the TV on Sunday afternoons as CHCH showcased its own kids' talent show, Tiny Talent Time, for 35 years, hosted by everyone's favourite, "Uncle Bill" Lawrence. Children from the region sang, danced and entertained. Any time during the week on CHCH, you could see broadcasts of our young people playing sports: Whether it was hockey or basketball or volleyball, CHCH was there to cover our high school and university athletes. For those of us in the Niagara Peninsula, CHCH is more than just a TV station, it is the voice of our community and our community's voice at Queen's Park.

New Democrat MPPs from Hamilton-Niagara are deeply concerned with Canwest Global's potential closure of CHCH. With a debt of approximately \$3.6 billion, Canwest has decided to cut costs. CHCH, along with four other stations across the country, is on the chopping block. New Democrats believe that the closure of this historic and iconic station would silence the voices of residents in our region and rob future generations of the great potential of local broadcasting.

From Fort Erie to St. Catharines, from Cambridge to Stoney Creek, CHCH had it covered. It was our hometown coverage, a station we could count on to represent our concerns and tell our stories. We always knew we could turn the dial to 11 and get the hometown story.

In 1954, CHCH, also known as "Lucky Channel 11", officially began broadcasting with a two-hour show telling the story of Hamilton. More than half a century later, Canwest is threatening to turn the final page in that story. In the era of big boxes and monocultural media, Canwest threatens to conglomerate even more, this time with the potential closure of Canada's first independent television station.

The lack of commitment on the part of the broadcasting corporations and our federal and provincial gov-

ernments to enforce Canadian content rules is alarming. Ontario lacks proper tax credits, regulations and enforcement of these regulations to ensure local TV stations actually reflect our communities. In a time when local channels are increasingly filling airtime with cheap American syndicated programs, this is yet another in a long list of attacks on homegrown media.

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If Canwest shuts CHCH, who will tell the stories of communities like Welland, Port Colborne, Burlington, Stoney Creek? We know that many in our home region share our concerns about the potential loss of our local channel. In the event that CHCH is sold, we urge the CRTC and the McGuinty government to fight to ensure that Canadian content regulations are a condition of that sale. We believe that anything else would be a wholesale abandonment of our right to a community voice. We empathize with the local residents because of the potential threat of having their community voice silenced.

New Democrats have a long history of fighting for adequate funding of arts and culture.

I can remember fighting for ACTRA three years ago, in Ottawa. I was fighting along with CTV star Gabrielle Miller, who was on Corner Gas. She was my lobby partner. It turned some heads in Ottawa. We got their attention because of local media.

We have long recognized that the arts and Canadian content and news media are essential building blocks to vibrant and informed communities. This sector contributes to the economic health of Ontario and is projected to be one of the highest-growth sectors in our province.

The member opposite talks about new media challenges. Frankly, I like to hold on to the old media. I support my local TV station. I can honestly say I'm not quite sure that we would get the coverage from, say, Toronto, Montreal or Ottawa if we didn't have our local channel. So I disagree totally with the member's comments.

New Democrats agree with the content of this motion; that in order to support a thriving arts sector and local news sources in all forms, appropriate support must come from both the provincial and federal levels.

There are a number of issues, when it comes to local news media, that New Democrats are concerned about. We are very concerned about the trend of failing to support Canadian-produced content and Canadian media content. Right now, we are troubled about the state of the CBC. Canada's publicly owned broadcaster is being forced to cut staff and cut programming. It would seem that the Harper government is willing to bail out private broadcasters while allowing the public broadcasters' ship to sink. This is inexcusable.

Local public broadcast channels provide a unique voice in communities across this country and across this province. This is an issue about which our federal NDP party has spoken out loudly, many times.

Just over a month ago, New Democrat heritage critic Charlie Angus slammed the heritage minister for failing to take action to save the CBC from deep cuts to staff and

services across our country. CBC plans to lay off 800 more employees and make significant cuts to regional, national and international programming—outrageous.

CBC management had asked Minister Moore for a temporary loan against future years' funding in order to keep itself afloat. Charlie Angus has said that securing the bridge financing would have protected the CBC's public assets and helped protect the integrity of local and regional service, as well as staff.

Mr. Angus said, "The minister had a chance to save 800 jobs, defend programming, and protect the publicly financed assets of the CBC, at no overall cost to the taxpayer. Instead he has let his party's anti-CBC ideological roots prevail by forcing our cherished public broadcaster to eat itself alive."

New Democrats have led the way in calling for reforms at the CBC that would allow them to mitigate years of budget crises like the one they're in now. This includes a 7- to 10-year mandate, with predetermined funding levels and performance objectives, as set out in the February 2008 Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage report on the CBC mandate, entitled CBC/Radio-Canada: Defining Distinctiveness in the Changing Media Landscape—as the member said, the changing media landscape.

While New Democrats strongly support the just-mentioned reforms at a federal level, we also want to touch on the need to support our provincial arts and cultural industry. While these sectors, not related to news media, have a different function, they are no less important.

New Democrats are concerned that the McGuinty Liberals have failed to understand the need for comprehensive support for Ontario's artists. Although the McGuinty government made a promise to bring forward status-of-the-artist legislation, the reality of what was introduced in 2007 was an enormous disappointment. The Status of Ontario's Artists Act created a weekend in June to celebrate artists. This is a wholly insignificant response and will do absolutely nothing for the livelihood of our artists.

New Democrats are thrilled that PMB 165, Protection for Artists, recently passed second reading. We are expecting the bill to go to committee in a timely fashion. We are also calling on the McGuinty government to bring forward the other supports that artists need: Implement a collective bargaining process for the arts sector; institute legally binding regulations that can protect child actors. These are important steps forward that the provincial government can take today.

New Democrats support strong local news media and arts and culture sectors. We urge all levels of government to fulfill their promises and support these important industries.

I want to commend the member for bringing forth this motion. It is critical and long overdue to the well-being of the media business in our province.

It's not just rural stations that we have to think about. We have to think about stations in Hamilton, Windsor,

St. Catharines and all the stations that surround the metropolis. These stations are very important to the people of their communities also. CHCH was the first independent station in our province. It appears that unfortunately this government and the federal government, and the media themselves, are putting this station in jeopardy by leaving it hanging without the support it needs.

Interjections.

Mr. Paul Miller: We need an NHL team in Hamilton. An NHL team will bring new life to CHCH. It will increase interest in the city of Hamilton. We don't need a team in Vaughan. Brantford is a little small. We need a city like Hamilton, which has an arena, to support a team. We are ready for an NHL franchise, and Mr. Gary Bettman is not doing us any favours in Ontario, he's not doing any favours to the NHL and he's not doing any favours to this hockey hotbed. A new team in Hamilton will also give new life to the media in Hamilton.

In closing, we in the NDP will be supporting this motion. I feel it is necessary and long overdue, and I'm happy to lend our support to it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Ms. Sophia Aggelonitis: It's my pleasure to speak about the importance of local media in my community. I must congratulate the honourable member from Algoma-Manitoulin for bringing this resolution to this House.

I would like to speak about a great TV station. CHCH began broadcasting in Hamilton 54 years ago. It was the first independent television station in Canada. Since then, it has provided the city's residents with essential information about what is happening in their neighbourhoods. It has kept elected officials accountable and ensured that all three levels of government are working for Hamilton.

For several months, CHCH has struggled through budget cutbacks and layoffs. In fact, the station was put up for sale in February. Though CHCH has managed to stay on the air, it is still in danger of being completely shut down.

Losing Hamilton's only television station would be devastating to our community. As well, approximately 100 people would lose their jobs—positions we can ill afford to lose, especially in these difficult economic times. It would also affect our local identity and destroy a vital part of the fabric of our city.

Preserving the station is an issue that is close to the hearts of many Hamiltonians. Thousands of people have rallied and showed support through fundraisers, petitions and rallies. CHCH's Donna Skelly has been acting as a representative for the station and has been working tirelessly to keep it on the air. She has argued, and I completely support her, that local news is an essential service that must be protected and preserved. The truth is that local media have been in trouble for some time. The current economic situation has only made matters worse for stations like CHCH. Advertising revenues were flat long before the economy began to slide. As far back as 1993, economists and broadcasters were warning that local television stations would be at risk unless measures

were taken to protect them. This is an issue that affects all residents of the province.

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Local news, current-event shows, sports coverage and lifestyle programs could become a thing of the past. Many local stations like CHCH have had to cut back on their news programming. Serious in-depth news takes a lot of time and a lot of money. Important stories are being passed by in local newsrooms due to a drastic lack of resources. If CHCH goes black, more than a million people in Hamilton, Halton and Niagara will lose their only source of local TV news. We simply cannot let that happen. I would like to stress that local news is not expendable. It is an essential part of any community, especially my community. That is why I will be lending my full support to this resolution.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I'm very pleased to rise today in support of ballot item 15, the resolution brought forward by my colleague the member from Algoma-Manitoulin. Some of my colleagues in the House know that I've worked in the television sector for 22 years. My work as co-anchor of the Italian-language newscast and associate producer was at CFMT, now OMNI Television, Canada's first multicultural television station. I was part of a station that broadcast in several languages to communities across Ontario, and I also worked in radio in my early 20s.

Certainly from my own experience I understand the value of television, radio and print media broadcasts that target specific communities, whether they are linguistic or geographic. This type of localized content reaches audiences that otherwise might not have access to the kind of information that directly affects them. It affects their day-to-day lives. By incorporating information relevant to that individual or that community, localized content helps people feel connected, and that promotes integration and engagement. People tune in when information speaks to them, and in this information age we need broadcasters, media, to make this connection with people. Writing for the *Hamilton Spectator* about the reduction in regional news presence at Queen's Park, journalist Jim Coyle said, "There were reporters stationed here from provincial TV outlets and numerous local radio stations. If a member from, say, Essex county or northern Ontario raised an issue to do with local manufacturing or mining, they could count on attention from several reporters with interest and knowledge on the issues."

The motion put forward today by my colleague from Algoma-Manitoulin refocuses our attention on the issue of local content and the need for stories that emerge from the communities. Yes, the media sector as a whole is facing challenges, just as other industries are experiencing a downturn and the economy as a whole is in a period of transition. But with the knowledge and information industries at the centre of the new economy, we cannot neglect the importance of protecting this vital aspect of the industry. Local news sources are essential to

creating links that will sustain communities. The media's ability to communicate people's stories is a powerful medium which we cannot and should not lose. In an urban setting, networks are also facing economic challenges, and this results in fewer investigative stories and less in-depth reporting, diminishing the possibility of Canadians to hear stories told from a variety of perspectives from which they can form their own opinions.

We heard from the member from Thornhill that competition makes media better. He spoke about the lack of advertising, about selling and buying media outlets, about the need to make money. What I would like to highlight is also the need for seniors, newcomers, the ones who are not Internet-savvy—the residents of Ontario who are losing their right to be informed in this era of change. What matters the most is that the news gets to all of us, that's what I say.

Our government sustains the cultural sector by promoting the creation of Canadian content. We are doing our part. The Ontario Media Development Corp. has a mandate to build the innovation, the capacity and the competitiveness of Ontario's cultural industry. It does this through programs such as the screen-based content initiative. Launched in June 2008, this program supports the creation of original content experienced on a screen-based medium, platform or device. Once the content has been produced, the industry is further supported through access to the OMDC content and marketing funds program.

One good example is Hot Docs, the Canadian International Documentary Festival, which is going on right now here in Toronto. The festival accessed funds from the OMDC to create Doc Shop, a digital on-line documentary marketplace that enhances the capacity for buyers to screen and acquire new Ontario documentaries. OMDC also co-administers, with the Ministry of Finance, tax credit programs to support Ontario's film and television industry.

Ontario needs people working in film, in television, in the media, and the growth of these industries will have a profound impact on the future prosperity of our province and our country. That's also why in January 2008 Ontario increased from 18% to 25% the Ontario production services tax credit. In the 2009 budget, this tax credit is proposed to become permanent in Ontario.

I would like to share a quote from Ontario's Minister of Culture: "Proposing to make these tax credits permanent will help to significantly grow the production sector and create more jobs for Ontarians."

Ontario is clearly making a statement about the importance of supporting the development of Canadian content. This support reinforces the importance of localized content, and in fact encourages the production of more Ontario stories.

As Ontario MPPs, we call on the federal government to do their part. Healthy discussion and a variety of perspectives reflect Ontario in the 21st century. Our media must continue to echo this variety. Strong local media helps to make local communities stronger. This is very

valid in northern Ontario, in rural communities, but also in Hamilton, in Guelph—in all the medium-sized cities of our province—and in cities like Toronto. We need the little local newspaper, the local media story, that can highlight the little neighbourhood stories that otherwise will get lost and will not be reported in the big newspapers. That's very important.

Again, I want to stress for multicultural communities how important it is to have the local newspaper in their language, the radio program in their language, and the television show and the newscasts in their own language. It makes a world of difference in understanding the new country, the new province that they're living in. It is really essential for them to integrate and to understand better even the laws that govern the land.

I will be supporting this motion. I'm very happy that my colleague has brought it forward.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I'm speaking in support of my colleague from Algoma-Manitoulin for bringing such an important issue to this House. I want to tell him that I'm passionate about it.

When I started out in life, when I was 20 or 21, I used to own a TV station, a radio station and also a small magazine. I think it's very important to keep it local. The important issues belong to the community. I think it's very important, I'm here to support it and I wish you all the luck and success. I think all the members of the House will support you, because you brought something very important for all of us.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate? You'd have to be very quick. Seeing none, the honourable member for Algoma-Manitoulin has up to two minutes for his reply.

Mr. Michael A. Brown: I appreciate the comments from the members for Thornhill, Hamilton East-Stoney Creek, Hamilton Mountain, York South-Weston, and the interesting intervention from my friend from London-Fanshawe.

First, I would just like to say to the member from Thornhill that maybe I didn't convey the message in the way that I wished to convey it. What I was really talking about was local reporters in local communities finding ways, and I don't care how, making sure that a local community's news is reported. As my friend from York South-Weston pointed out, there is a difference in the local stories and interests. Often, in this world we live in, we will know more about what is happening in Afghanistan than we will know about what's happening around the corner. In some ways, I don't think that strengthens our neighbourhoods very well.

I appreciate the comments from the member for Hamilton East-Stoney Creek. I understand. Losing a local television station or even having its services dramatically reduced is something that we have seen in this province, and it's unfortunate. Again, we come back to losing a sense of community that I think we need to have

in this day and age. The member from Hamilton Mountain so eloquently championed the same issue.

It's important for all of us that we find ways to support our local community. It's not just about governments; it's about people in general. You need to advertise in your local papers, and you need to read your local papers. You need to provide input to your local radio stations and television. It's something we could all do.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Pursuant to standing order 98(e), the House is suspended until the expiry of the allotted two and a half hours for private members' public business. That will be at 4:15.

The House suspended proceedings from 1602 to 1615.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Order. I just ask members to take their seats, please.

All matters relating to private members' public business having been completed—or, no, that's wrong.

Laughter.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Oh, well. You can tell I want to get out of here.

The time provided for private members' public business has expired.

PROTECTION FOR WORKERS

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): We will first deal with ballot item number 13, standing in the name of Mrs. Mitchell.

Mrs. Mitchell has moved private member's notice of motion number 83. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENT

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): We will now deal with ballot item number 14.

Mr. Yakabuski has moved private member's notice of motion number 89. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard some noes.

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

We'll vote on this item after we deal with the next ballot item.

NEWS MEDIA

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): We will now deal with ballot item number 15.

Mr. Brown has moved private member's notice of motion number 88. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): We will call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1618 to 1623.

HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENT

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Mr. Yakabuski has moved private member's notice of motion number 89.

All those in favour of the motion will please rise and remain standing until recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Amott, Ted	Hardeman, Emie	Yakabuski, John
Bailey, Robert	Shurman, Peter	
Chudleigh, Ted	Sterling, Norman W.	

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): All those opposed to the motion will please rise and remain standing until recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Aggelonitis, Sophia	Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Qaadri, Shafiq
Albanese, Laura	Fonseca, Peter	Ramal, Khalil
Arthurs, Wayne	Jaczek, Helena	Rinaldi, Lou
Balkissoon, Bas	Jeffrey, Linda	Ruprecht, Tony
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Kular, Kuldip	Sandals, Liz
Best, Margaret	Kwinter, Monte	Sousa, Charles
Broten, Laurel C.	Mangat, Amrit	Tabuns, Peter
Brown, Michael A.	Miller, Paul	Takhar, Harinder S.
Colle, Mike	Moridi, Reza	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Dhillon, Vic	Pendergast, Leeanna	Zimmer, David
Duguid, Brad	Phillips, Gerry	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 7; the nays are 32.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): I declare the motion lost.

Motion negated.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GREATER TORONTO
AND HAMILTON AREA
TRANSIT IMPLEMENTATION ACT, 2009
LOI DE 2009 SUR L'AMÉNAGEMENT
DU RÉSEAU DE TRANSPORT EN COMMUN
DE LA RÉGION DU GRAND TORONTO
ET DE HAMILTON

Mrs. Jeffrey, on behalf of Mr. Bradley, moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 163, An Act to amend the Greater Toronto Transportation Authority Act, 2006 and to make consequential amendments to another Act / Projet de loi 163, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2006 sur la Régie des transports du grand Toronto et apportant des modifications corrélatives à une autre loi.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Debate?

Mrs. Linda Jeffrey: I'm pleased to rise in the House today to begin third reading debate on legislation that, if passed, would merge GO Transit and Metrolinx in order to build more public transit faster, ease congestion and create jobs in Ontario.

This is a win-win-win piece of legislation. It is legislation with substantial environmental, economic and social benefits. It's a unique opportunity to streamline government agencies, cut red tape and accelerate the start of key infrastructure projects that will generate shovel-ready jobs now, when we need them most. These will be well-paying jobs for our construction industry. To top it all off, these are going to be green jobs that will benefit the environment as well as our economy.

Ontario can protect the environment by tackling congestion and addressing climate change. Expanding public transit means getting more cars off the road and reducing greenhouse gas emissions, making the air that we breathe cleaner. This new legislation will enable the McGuinty government to get more transit projects built faster and more effectively, and enable it to put the right pieces in place to build a regional transit network for people and businesses.

We cannot wait for the next generation to act, and we won't get there without acting decisively. We recognize the importance of this piece of legislation and the need to get it right. As the greater Toronto and Hamilton area continues to grow, we need to move quickly to build better public transit systems for our commuters. Ontario has an ambitious transit agenda, and we're working hard with all of our partners to make it happen.

In November 2008, Metrolinx released its regional transportation plan to create a seamless, integrated transportation network in the greater Toronto and Hamilton area for the next 25 years. The plan, appropriately named The Big Move, was shaped by municipal leaders in the greater Toronto and Hamilton areas. These municipal officials did excellent work on this plan, and they deserve our thanks and our appreciation.

By consulting widely and working together, the Metrolinx board identified the components of the regional transit network that greater Toronto and Hamilton area residents and businesses need. We're taking the best of the plan and creating winning conditions to implement it. This is not the time to delay, when action is needed now. That is why we are proposing to merge GO Transit and Metrolinx through the proposed Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area Transit Implementation Act, 2009.

We need an organization with the necessary expertise to implement an integrated and multi-modal transit network for the most populated region in Ontario. We need to bring the planning and implementation together to get regional transit projects fast-tracked.

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The Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area Transit Implementation Act, 2009, would merge Metrolinx and GO Transit and put in place the tools for moving quickly as we take the regional transportation plan off the drawing board and into service. This is our primary objective in bringing forward Bill 163. We are acting decisively and with a sense of urgency to build regional transit projects faster and more effectively.

The new organization will be directly accountable to the provincial government for the delivery of our am-

bitious transit plans. And make no mistake: They must deliver.

The seamless regional transit network we are asking the new Metrolinx to build would generate 430,000 jobs in Ontario over 25 years. It would reduce congestion and greenhouse gas emissions to protect the environment and improve the quality of life for our families and communities.

The visionary work of municipal leaders in shaping the regional transportation plan, which is called The Big Move, is in step with our transit objectives for the most populated region in Ontario. Under Bill 163, the actions and decisions of the new Metrolinx organization will be guided by that plan. Any changes to the plan, including those directed by the minister, would be subject to consultation with municipal and other stakeholders.

To sum up, we want seamless transit, better service, quick commute times and cleaner air. This is something we have heard from all sectors, and we're moving forward to achieve those goals.

This legislation proposes to merge GO Transit and Metrolinx into a single new transit agency named Metrolinx, which can implement the regional transportation plan quickly and efficiently.

The new Metrolinx mandate would include:

- leadership in the planning and implementation of an integrated transportation network across the greater Toronto and Hamilton area;

- implementation of the transit projects recommended in the regional transportation plan;

- operation of GO Transit services;

- providing leadership in joint transit vehicle procurement for Ontario municipalities; and

- in the future, responsibility for overseeing the Presto fare card system.

Metrolinx has ably built the solid foundations for the agency and demonstrated its planning expertise with the development of the regional transportation plan.

At the same time, I want to acknowledge and thank the board members of GO Transit for their wise counsel and service. GO Transit has a strong track record of building large-scale transit projects and running transit operations and services.

We propose to consolidate the expertise of two agencies under one roof. The synergy created by bringing these two organizations together would not only fulfill the original intent of Metrolinx, but it would also help get shovels in the ground faster on new transit projects.

We are moving now to a phase of building and implementation, where people with a broad range of professional and corporate experience will be most helpful. This model is the norm in most international transit jurisdictions around the world. The Metrolinx board will include individuals with experience in a broad range of relevant disciplines, including transportation, planning, construction, finance and labour relations.

To lead the transition phase, Mr. Robert Prichard has been named transition adviser, helping to plan for the merger of the Metrolinx and GO Transit organizations.

The transition adviser is working with a transition advisory board, including Metrolinx chair Rob MacIsaac and GO Transit chair Peter Smith, to prepare Metrolinx and GO Transit to implement the regional transportation plan as fast as possible.

Working with municipalities, the new Metrolinx can build regional transit infrastructure that will promote stronger communities with sustainable urban development and a higher quality of life for everyone.

Our proposed legislation puts in place the tools for taking the regional transportation plan, as I said, off the drawing board and into service. It includes provisions for Metrolinx to own and control GO Transit and designated regional transit projects.

Our proposal will ensure that as Ontario invests taxpayers' money for transit infrastructure in the greater Toronto and Hamilton area, Metrolinx will have the ability to design, build and own these assets which could be financed over their lifetime. These are tools that would allow Metrolinx to build the necessary infrastructure and deliver better service to customers. We have structured our proposal to significantly advance the development of an integrated regional transit network for the greater Toronto and Hamilton areas.

Almost 600 million transit trips occur each year in the greater Toronto and Hamilton area. We need to build a regional network with convenient commute times, easy connections and a renewed focus on customer service. It's now time for Ontario to build. New transit projects will benefit our economy, our communities and our environment and generate thousands of construction jobs over the coming years. This will build a stronger economy for Ontario.

The economic, social and environmental benefits of moving more quickly to implementation will be substantial. Congestion costs the greater Toronto and Hamilton areas an estimated \$6 billion annually. More and better transit infrastructure gives us additional capacity to handle more riders and it means better service. With fewer single-occupant cars on the road and more people using public transit, we will reduce greenhouse gas emissions that harm our environment.

The McGuinty government has made transit one of our top priorities, and we have made significant financial commitments in the process. We have demonstrated our commitment to getting people out of their cars and onto transit, making the largest investment in public transit in a decade. This government's commitment to public transit is clear. Since 2003, the government has invested \$7.4 billion in public transit, including more than \$2.5 billion in GO Transit. Regional transit is finally catching up with regional needs. Since 2003, Ontario has committed more than \$2.9 billion to help the city of Toronto improve and expand transit.

On April 1, 2009, our government announced its plans to move forward on major public transit projects in the greater Toronto area, costing an estimated \$9 billion. This investment will create jobs, help move people and goods, and support future growth in the greater Toronto

area. These projects include more buses, stations and dedicated bus lines and lanes for phase 2 of York Viva bus rapid transit. York Viva bus lane construction will begin this year, with the first segment along Highway 7, from Markham centre to Richmond Hill centre, to be completed in 2011, with all core segments in service by the end of 2013 and all remaining segments in service by 2018.

Upgrading and extending the Scarborough rapid transit line: The Scarborough rapid transit rehabilitation and extension are expected to be completed and in service by 2015. A new rapid transit line on Eglinton Avenue from Kennedy station to Pearson airport: The Eglinton rail line will run 31 kilometres and include a 13-kilometre section built underground; and a new rapid transit line for Finch West, from the Yonge subway line to Highway 27 and Humber College and east to the Don Mills station. Construction is expected to start in 2010, with completion by 2013.

These projects are subject to environmental and other approvals, and detailed per-project costs will be finalized closer to each project's start date. These public transit projects, and others, outlined in our Move Ontario 2020 commitment will help develop a sustainable transportation system that gets people out of their single-occupant cars and onto public transit. This will reduce congestion and support sustainable urban development, stronger communities and a higher quality of life, as well as improving air quality. Once the regional transportation projects are built, it could reduce annual greenhouse gas emissions from passenger transportation by 0.7 tonnes per person in the greater Toronto and Hamilton area.

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In June 2007, we announced Move Ontario 2020, a landmark plan to invest \$11.5 billion towards numerous public transit projects in the greater Toronto and Hamilton area, the largest public transit investment in Canadian history. The Move Ontario 2020 commitment forms the foundation investment for transit projects identified by the Metrolinx regional transportation plan. We have asked the federal government to enhance this investment with an additional \$6 billion in federal funds.

The regional transportation plan, or The Big Move, is a public transit strategy that includes many Quick Win projects. In the spring 2008 budget, the province committed more than \$744 million to fund all the Quick Win transit projects recommended by Metrolinx. These Quick Wins included \$136 million for GO Transit service expansion. They also included \$305.9 million for Toronto to improve capacity on the Yonge subway and other projects to provide a worthy head start in planning for the TTC's Transit City light rail plan.

Also included in the announcement was \$105.6 million for phase 2 of York region's Viva bus rapid transit system along the Highway 7 and Yonge Street corridors, and \$26.5 million for the development of a Dundas and Hurontario higher-order transit corridor in Peel. Halton region's Dundas Street rapid transit received \$57.6 million. We invested \$82.3 million in Durham region for

the Highway 2 bus rapid transit spine line, and \$29.8 million for Hamilton to support improvements to the King-Main and James-Upper James rapid transit corridors.

Through the 2007 economic update, the government provided \$300 million to municipalities to address their immediate transit capital state-of-good-repair needs.

In March of this year, our government announced \$321 million in provincial gas tax funding as a continued source of sustainable funding for public transit. Since 2004, the McGuinty government has committed more than \$1.3 billion through the gas tax program to introduce transit service improvements and promote increased ridership to 90 transit systems in 115 communities across Ontario.

GO Transit began in 1967 and carried 2.5 million passengers in the first year of service. Today, GO carries nearly 55 million passengers each year. On a typical weekday, GO runs 183 train trips and more than 2,000 bus trips that carry 215,000 passengers: 180,000 passengers on the trains and about 35,000 by bus.

On February 17, 2009, the governments of Canada and Ontario announced a joint investment of \$500 million for the GO Transit revitalization project, which will improve GO Transit service and reliability. The initial announcement included \$249 million towards a series of parking improvements at GO Transit stations throughout the greater Toronto area. It also provided funds for the Hamilton Junction rail-to-rail grade separation project. We also announced that GO Transit riders would benefit from an additional \$213 million in service improvements.

In addition to maintenance activities across the system, GO will refurbish locomotives and purchase new two-level passenger rail coaches. They will be installing snow-melt systems and building bus shelters using this new federal and provincial funding.

All of these projects help reduce wait times for commuters and get more cars off the road. These investments in public transit give people more time with their families while also creating jobs and making a real difference to the communities that GO Transit serves. With these investments, we're getting people moving and the economy going.

In order to make sure we got this legislation right, we consulted with our stakeholders on how we could better serve the daily transportation needs of the 5.5 million people in the greater Toronto and Hamilton areas with expanded public transit. I'd like to take a minute or two to thank those people who took the time and interest to provide us with their perspectives on Bill 163, starting with those who made presentations to the committee: Natalie Litwin, from Transport 2000 Ontario; Peter Miasek, from the Transportation Regional Action Committee; Brian Zeiler-Kligman, from the Toronto Board of Trade; and Dan Rodrigues, from the Ontario Chamber of Commerce.

Thank you to those who made written submissions: the city of Toronto, the region of Durham, the Ontario

Chamber of Commerce and the Residential and Civil Construction Alliance of Ontario.

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce stated in a letter written on April 23:

“Mounting congestion, gridlock, and border delays have resulted in lost competitiveness and quality of life in the province. This impact is most noticeable in Ontario’s busiest region, the greater Toronto and Hamilton area.... Transport Canada estimates the cost of congestion in Toronto alone is \$1.6 billion annually. By 2021, commute times within” the greater Toronto and Hamilton areas “could increase by more than 50%, increasing the cost of congestion by \$7 billion a year. Gridlock results in lost trade opportunities, jeopardizes employee recruitment/retention, and reduces the province’s overall economic competitiveness.

“Bill 163 is timely as it aims to provide Metrolinx with the tools necessary to more effectively fulfill its mandate of creating and implementing an efficient, integrated, multi-modal transit strategy for the greater Toronto and Hamilton areas.

“The Ontario Chamber of Commerce welcomes this bill as it represents the province’s commitment towards addressing the greater Toronto and Hamilton area’s transportation challenges.”

We also heard from the Toronto Board of Trade. On April 1, 2009, the Toronto Board of Trade issued a press release. They stated that Premier Dalton McGuinty’s \$9-billion transit announcement for the Toronto region is “a crucial leap forward in the implementation of Metrolinx’ \$50-billion plan to improve the safe, efficient and sustainable movement of goods and people.

“In a single day, this government has almost entirely delivered on its promise to spend \$11.5 billion on new transit projects for this region,” said Toronto Board of Trade president and CEO Carol Wilding. ‘It also demonstrates the government’s commitment to a regional vision of transit for Toronto.’

“Today’s announcement, coupled with Monday’s governance reforms for Metrolinx, shows this government is acting on the advice of Toronto’s business community. The Toronto Board of Trade has been a leading advocate of a regional transit vision, and much of today’s funds are destined for projects the board has singled out as its priorities, including:

—the Finch rapid transit line,

—the refurbishment and expansion of the Scarborough rapid transit line, and

—the construction of dedicated bus lanes in York region to enhance the Viva system.

“This region’s economic growth is being constrained, quite literally, by gridlock,” said Ms. Wilding. ‘Our inability to move people and goods efficiently is a disincentive to business. The projects announced today are an environmentally responsible way to open up our network and give our economy room to grow. That’s why this city’s business community so strongly supports public transit.’

“The board of trade will continue to work with the government to maintain the momentum of this week’s announcements. ‘We need to bridge the funding gap to make sure we can go the distance on a regional transit solution,’ said Ms. Wilding. ‘A strong transit strategy is paramount to keeping people, goods, and our economy moving forward.’”

1650

I believe we have ably demonstrated leadership and attached the necessary funding commitments to build more and better transit, not only in the greater Toronto and Hamilton areas but across this province. Investing in infrastructure creates jobs, stimulates economic growth, supports a cleaner environment and enhances the overall quality of life for all Ontarians.

Our transit agenda is ambitious. As I said earlier, we cannot postpone progress, and we can’t wait to act. The proposed legislation includes provisions for Metrolinx to own and control GO Transit and designed regional transit projects. This would provide the new Metrolinx with the tools necessary to expeditiously implement the regional transportation plan.

If passed, this act would consolidate Metrolinx and GO Transit into a single organization named Metrolinx. We will implement transit projects sooner. We will continue to improve GO Transit service. We will lead the way with transit vehicle procurement for Ontario.

We will continue to work and consult with municipalities to build stronger communities with sustainable urban development and a renewed transit infrastructure that will promote a higher quality of life for everyone. They are crucial partners in this effort.

Our proposed legislation is not the only means for merging GO Transit and Metrolinx. It also puts in place the tools for taking the regional transportation plan off the drawing board and into service. The combined result is the creation of a single regional transportation body that is properly equipped to focus on project delivery.

We are moving into a phase of building and implementation, where people with a broad range of professional and corporate experience will be most helpful. This is a model we have seen working to good effect in other large transit agencies around the world. We have put the right people in place to oversee the smooth transition for the consolidation of Metrolinx and GO Transit.

Our transit advisory board experts in planning, finance and development would be able to implement the regional transportation plan as quickly as possible. This proposed merger, which fulfills the original intent of Metrolinx, will help get shovels in the ground faster on new transit projects and, at a time when the economy is challenged, lead to thousands more construction jobs over the coming years, and a stronger economy.

Our proposal will ensure that as Ontario invests taxpayer money for transit infrastructure in the greater Toronto and Hamilton areas, Metrolinx will have the ability to design, build and own these assets that could be amortized over their lifetime. These are tools that will

allow the new Metrolinx to build the necessary infrastructure more quickly, deliver better service to customers through new transit projects and pay off the asset over the longer term.

Our proposed legislation shows how Ontario is moving forward to build more transit and to do it more quickly and more cost-effectively. We have structured our proposal carefully, to significantly advance development of an integrated regional transit network for the greater Toronto and Hamilton areas. As I stated earlier, almost 600 million transit trips occur each day in the greater Toronto and Hamilton areas. We must build, and need to build, a regional network with quick commute times, easy connections and a renewed focus on customer service.

Our proposed legislation is about bringing together two organizations to streamline government agencies and accelerate the start of key infrastructure projects that will generate shovel-ready jobs now, when we need them most. These will be well-paying jobs for Ontario's construction industry, and will be green jobs that benefit the environment as well as the economy. Building better public transit infrastructure means getting more cars off the road, reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

Approving this legislation will help Ontario make the air we breathe cleaner. It will enable us to get more transit projects built better and faster, and put the right pieces in place to build a regional transit network with quicker commute times for people and businesses.

We know that building new transit projects will benefit our economy, our communities, our environment and, more importantly, our province. I would encourage all members in this House to support the bill, and I thank you for listening.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Thank you. Further debate? The honourable member from—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): There are no questions or comments on time-allocated debate. Further debate?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: This is one disturbing bill. I was here for the debate on the Greater Toronto Transportation Authority bill, the predecessor. At that time, we talked about the lack of resources and authority for the Greater Toronto Transportation Authority and our concern that in the end, without resources and authority, the entity that was set up, the one that was going to take over GO Transit anyway, would have very little impact on the profound problems that we see in this region: in Toronto, the greater Toronto area and Hamilton. Frankly, in terms of the Greater Toronto Transportation Authority, I think we're probably right: not that there was a failure with the board of directors there—from all that can be told, they in fact functioned well; not that there was a problem with the bureaucracy—in fact, they were given the direction to produce a transportation plan within a set period of time. Apparently they did that.

What we have before us today is another attempt to square a circle of trying to make transportation work in a

city region that is not built for transit, that is built for cars, that in its very foundations presents a profound problem to anyone who wants to plan rationally for transit. What this bill does, notwithstanding the long list of construction projects that was read out by the parliamentary assistant, who has performed ably both in committee and here—I have no criticism of her in those matters. But the construction projects could have gone ahead if the GTTA or Metrolinx never existed. The minister would do what I assume he will do when this act is adopted: He and the Premier will decide what's politically critical and they'll move those things ahead end of story.

What we see with this bill, the child of the GTTA bill, the Greater Toronto Transportation Authority bill, is a process that cuts out input from the local municipalities. Their representatives will be cast off this board in their entirety. What we see is a corporation whose board will be appointed by the government, that will be answerable to the government, that will not have any independent political status and thus, frankly, will serve, and not serve at the pleasure of the government of the day. This will not be a board that will be made up of people who know the political realities and the political complexities of this region. They may know them in a general way, but I have to say that there is nothing like being elected into office and being subjected to the occasional flamethrower to teach you what power is and is not in a governmental situation. I can see from the silent commentary of my colleague across the aisle that she understands that process of education that we all go through.

This bill opens the door to privatization and the development of public-private partnerships for provision of transportation services. I think that's a huge problem. I'll enlarge on that as we go through.

This bill doesn't set up all the construction or all the job creation that was talked about. In fact, as far as I can tell, it probably will not accelerate the process of decision-making and implementation, because this corporation will start to hit some of the reefs that are there just underneath the surface in every region of this country.

We do need to move ahead. We do need to move ahead to an effective, capable, affordable system of regional transportation. No one in this House would argue against that. Will this bill do that? That is another question entirely. What the bill will do is reduce transparency. Meetings that previously were open will no longer be open—a direction that people should consider. Right now in municipal government, if you want to have a closed meeting, you have to have a reason for closing the doors. In this legislation, there's a presumption that a meeting will be closed unless the board wants to open it up.

1700

The chief executive officer of this corporation will not be appointed by the board of directors of this corporation; that person will be appointed by the minister. Their ability to be independent, to make commentary, to act in

any way at all that's at odds with government policy or to challenge government policy is gone. The elected officials are gone from the board of directors. The minister can unilaterally amend transit plans that are put forward by this corporation.

So the question that really does come to mind is: Why bother? Why go through all this agony of setting up a board of directors that's meeting regularly if in fact the decisions are going to be made out of the minister's office in the end? Why not just hire some very capable civil servants—and there are a number of people in Ontario who have those skills, those outlooks that allow them to advise well and to administer—and let them get on with the job? Why go through all the agony of setting up an independent corporation? Nonetheless, that's what will be done.

We went through debate on this bill, and one of my concerns was making sure that in the bill itself, it was very clear that the highest priority of the board, of the corporation, was public transit—not cars, not trucks, not highways, but public transit. Because all of the things that the government talks about in terms of efficient movement of people across this region, in terms of dealing with pollution, with greenhouse gas emissions, is based on having a rational urban form with public transit that serves it. If in fact the direction to this corporation is to not make public transit the highest priority, I have to tell you, the pressure will be tremendous to always push it back. There's a lot to be made in building highways, and there's a lot to be made in selling the vehicles that run on those highways. Fair enough. But they should not be the highest priority.

I have to say that, in the course of the clause-by-clause debate, I moved that giving the highest priority to public transit be incorporated in the bill. The reply of the government was, "We recognize the importance of this legislation and the need to get it right. We agree that public transit is our top priority and we're pleased to see that public transit was front and centre in the regional transportation plan adopted by Metrolinx in November." Well, they shouldn't have just been pleased to see it; if they hadn't delivered a plan with it front and centre, they should have been dismissed out of hand. However, "Metrolinx's priorities and decisions are guided by that plan, which reflects the responsibilities of Metrolinx to consider all modes of transportation, including highways, transit, walking and cycling. Tying the hands of Metrolinx is not the best way, we believe, to support our transit objectives. The board needs to be able to find the right balance amongst all modes of transportation. Therefore, we won't be supporting this motion."

This is not a question of fairness; this is a question of setting direction and being clear with the organization that is under your control as to where you want it to go. When I'm driving a car, I'm fairly directive. If I decide I want to go to a particular place, I don't want to be driving on the other side of a four-lane highway with oncoming traffic, and I don't want to drive into the field. I want to stay in my lane and I want to avoid collisions. I set

direction; I have priorities. When we set up a corporation that will be dispensing billions of dollars and be responsible for moving hundreds of thousands—millions—of people, making sure that they can get from their home to their work and back from wherever they are to wherever they want to be, then we, as a public authority, have a responsibility to give an overriding direction, and the overriding direction has to be public transit.

I don't see much in this bill about cycling and walking. In fact, if you're going to have cycling and walking, that's another bill, and that bill is all about urban form. What we're talking about here is transportation systems, and the transportation system you want in this sort of regional authority is one that has public transit not as a key priority—not one among a number of priorities, but the highest priority. To say that the government doesn't want to tie the hands of Metrolinx doesn't make sense. When you write this legislation, you're telling it what it's going to do—not a strong argument, not a good argument, and the wrong argument in terms of what has to happen in Toronto and the greater Toronto area.

There's concern about the relationship now between Metrolinx and the local municipalities. As I have said, the representatives from those municipalities are going to be removed from the board. People will be appointed to this board who are not politicians, explicitly. You know, we do have our failings, we have our weaknesses and our foibles, but it is useful to have someone who has gone through the wringer on a board like this to help look out for the problems that will come. It's useful to have someone on this board who will understand what sort of information municipalities will need to have in order to respond rationally to transportation plans that are put forward by this board, by this ministry. Lacking that, there will be unnecessary misunderstandings—because there will always be some misunderstandings—and unnecessary conflicts. It's a mistake to change that board, and it's a mistake as well to not require this Metrolinx board to inform municipalities that are going to be affected by regional transportation plans of the impact of those plans.

We were told, when I moved that municipalities should be instructed about what is going to happen to them with new transportation plans, that, "Municipalities are crucial partners in achieving our transit and broader transportation goals in the greater Toronto and Hamilton area." I assume they're crucial enough partners that we need to remove their representatives from our board of directors. "We're committed to ensuring the continued and ongoing consultations with municipalities as we move forward with the implementation of the regional transportation plan."

"We feel that municipalities and not Metrolinx are best able to identify the implications of provincial plans and policies for their local transit systems. The motion"—the one I put forward saying that Metrolinx has to inform municipalities about what their plans will mean for those municipalities—"would result in a confusing role for Metrolinx, advising municipalities about their

own local transit systems rather than focusing on implementing the regional transit system in partnership with municipalities.”

One of the things I learned about communication early on was that if you can't explain something to someone, then you may not have clarity in your own thinking. If I, running the Greater Toronto Transit Authority, go to Durham or Mississauga or Brampton and say, “We're doing this, and it's going to have this impact on you,” and either they don't understand or they point out something that's radically different, it may be that my initial thinking was not adequate to the task. So I would say that rejecting this means that Metrolinx's board and its bureaucrats are not going to have to go through the process of actually thinking through the impact of the plans that they bring forward. They are not going to have to go to municipalities to say, “We're doing this. This is what we expect the impact to be.” That's a mistake on the part of the government. Let's set aside the governance for a moment, and the other issues. Simply in terms of operations, it's to your advantage to think it through beforehand and test it that way. It didn't happen.

I tried again in the course of the clause-by-clause to make transit the highest priority of the corporation, and, as I said numerous times in the course of clause-by-clause debate—I've already made that argument, so I won't go through it at any length, other than to say that if you don't have it as the highest priority, you're not going to have it implemented as the highest priority.

Privatization: I moved an amendment that transit systems not be sold to for-profit entities, that in fact we shouldn't transfer transit systems in any form from public to private hands.

1710

There are substantial reasons for this. If you go to some Latin American countries where transit is privatized, you have multiple bus companies running along the same routes, with the inefficiencies that result from that. If you look at the history of transit in North America, look at what happened with Los Angeles and its transit system bought up in the 1940s by General Motors and scrapped in order to create a market for the purchase of more automobiles. When you turn over public transit to non-public hands, you open up a society to a vulnerability. If you look at Highway 407 and that being turned over to private hands and the frustration of motorists and governments alike trying to deal with the private control of a central piece of infrastructure in this region, you can understand, again, why we should not be turning public transit over to those hands.

But there's another consideration, and that is that if you look at the record of public-private partnerships, which is the term that was used under the Harris regime, or alternative financing proposals—the wording, the new language, the Newspeak that we use under this regime—you'll see that we have consistently had overruns in the costs of providing hospitals that have been of great consequence to communities like Brampton, like Sarnia, and will be of consequence to other communities.

It was interesting to read in the *Globe and Mail* Report on Business within the last few weeks about the experience of British Columbia, where private companies were getting out of the public-private partnership business because the cost of capital in a time of credit uncertainty was rising to the point where it was no longer something that was useful to them.

If you look at the magazine *The Economist*—not particularly a left-wing publication—talking about the impact of public-private partnerships on the national health system in the UK, there's a negative impact, as they said, causing a hemorrhage of cash in that system.

Why would we do that to our public transit system? I don't see the logic in that.

This bill before us is one that doesn't set transport in common, public transit, as the highest priority. It reduces democratic control, reduces the importance of the partnership with municipalities and opens the door to greater privatization. These are not positive things. I don't think the trade-off is one that most people in this province want, because in fact I don't think it's going to result in faster construction of new transit.

If we look at what's been happening in Toronto with Transit City, the city of Toronto has been very happy to receive the promise of money from the provincial government for building new streetcar lines, light rail transit. They've been working for the past few years in making sure that the environmental assessments, the planning and the engineering are all in place so that when the money comes, they can proceed rapidly. They were smart about what they did. I don't see why that process can't be reproduced consistently without having to set up an act which, at the centre of it, is simply shifting power rather than opening the door to a lot more transit.

Speaker, I know that my time is drawing short because there has been a time allocation on this bill.

I want to mention one other thing about this bill, and that's the proposal that the board will not have to report back before 2013 on its investment strategy. I said in committee, and I'll say it here, I find it extraordinary that the window for decision-making on the investment strategy takes us to four years from now and past the date of the next provincial election. Frankly, if you can't figure it out in a year, then what exactly is the efficiency that comes from this new corporation? Four years from now is an extraordinarily convenient date. I was a city councillor. I had the opportunity to understand the magic of the calendar and the timing of decisions and the timing of announcements. I moved, the NDP moved, in committee that that date be changed so that people would have an opportunity to comment before the next election. That amendment wasn't made. That is a mistake on the part of the government.

It is a shame that such a critical issue, and that's the transit for this whole region, is not being treated with the openness, with the democratic approach, the public approach, that it most profoundly needs.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Hon. Gerry Phillips: I move adjournment of the debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Third reading debate adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Orders of the day.

Hon. Gerry Phillips: I move adjournment of the House.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

This House stands adjourned till next Monday at 10:30 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1716.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

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Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman, Tonia Grannum

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Brownell, Jim (LIB)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
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Caplan, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Carroll, Hon. / L'hon. M. Aileen (LIB)	Barrie	Minister of Culture / Ministre de la Culture Minister Responsible for Seniors / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires des personnes âgées
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Flynn, Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	
Fonseca, Hon. / L'hon. Peter (LIB)	Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
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Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hoy, Pat (LIB)	Chatham–Kent–Essex	
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara- Ouest–Glanbrook	
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Johnson, Rick (LIB)	Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock	
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Rinaldi, Lou (LIB)	Northumberland—Quinte West	
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Sandals, Liz (LIB)	Guelph	
Savoline, Joyce (PC)	Burlington	
Sergio, Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	
Shurman, Peter (PC)	Thornhill	
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Sousa, Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	
Sterling, Norman W. (PC)	Carleton—Mississippi Mills	
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Kevin Daniel Flynn, France Gélinas
Helena Jaczek, Sylvia Jones
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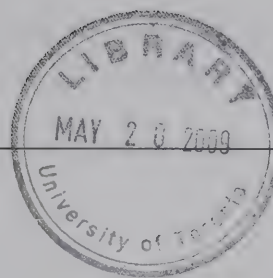
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Première session, 39^e législature

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Monday 11 May 2009

Lundi 11 mai 2009

Speaker
Honourable Steve Peters

Président
L'honorable Steve Peters

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Greffière
Deborah Deller

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 11 May 2009

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 11 mai 2009

The House met at 1030.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Good morning. Please remain standing for the Lord's Prayer, followed by a moment of silence for personal thought and inner reflection.

Prayers.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mrs. Liz Sandals: I'm pleased to introduce a constituent of mine, Una Murray, who is in the east gallery. She's here to visit with her granddaughter, page Kenzie Murray.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I'm pleased to welcome a volunteer from my office, Oriana Kobelak.

Mr. Peter Shurman: I'd like to welcome to the House a group from Inspiring You Politically. Even though they are not here yet, I'd like to get it on the record.

Inspiring You Politically is a community organization that was developed to foster and motivate community involvement by young adults in the areas of municipal and provincial politics and create greater representation by African Canadians in politics. I'd like to mention that all members are invited to a reception by this group: 11:30 to 1, in rooms 228 and 230.

Hon. Michael Chan: Today I would like to welcome a large group of individuals to Queen's Park. The organization Inspiring You Politically is here today to launch the Canadian Black Caucus. I welcome students from the following schools: Crawford Seventh Day Adventist, Centennial College, Westview High School, Seneca College, George Brown College, University of Toronto, York University, Ryerson University, Blessed Trinity High School, St. Joseph Morrow Park and Henry Kelsey Senior Public School.

I would like to welcome the leaders of Inspiring You Politically, including former Speaker Alvin Curling, Sandy Thomas, Bev Salmon, Dr. Sheldon Taylor, Garnett Manning, Chris Bullen, Bernice Carnegie, hockey great Herb Carnegie, Allison Lawrence, Rosemary Sadlier, Ken Jeffers, Gwyn Chapman, Jennifer Matherson, Warren Salmon, Dr. Alex MacGregor and Pastor Audley James. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I'd like to welcome to the gallery for the first time, my daughter Emily and her friend Matt Reaume from Pembroke.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Also on behalf of the member from Oak Ridges–Markham and page Kenzie Murray, besides her grandmother Una Murray, who

was already introduced, we'd like to welcome her mother Carol Heck and a friend of hers, Margie Parkin. Welcome today.

As well, I take this opportunity to welcome, in the east members' gallery, the mayors from the region of Niagara. Welcome to Queen's Park.

A special welcome to Peter Partington, a former member from the 29th Parliament, representing Brock. Peter, welcome back to Queen's Park today.

I remind the members, as well, of a reception of the Ontario Craft Brewers in rooms 228 to 230 from 5 to 7 this evening. I'd like to welcome all members, staff and all staff within the Legislature.

There being no further introductions, it is time for oral questions.

ORAL QUESTIONS

PROTECTION FOR WORKERS

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: My question is to the Premier, and it has to do with the failure of two of your ministers to take action when they heard disturbing allegations of abuse against a prominent Liberal member of Parliament. I want to quote you in the year 2000: "Cabinet ministers should live up to a high standard of responsibility and unquestionable ethical behaviour."

Premier, you've tried to slough this off by suggesting that your ministers simply had a tin ear and that their failure to act looks bad, but that's it. That's your public spin. Premier, why are you endorsing the moral and ethical failures of your ministers?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I welcome the opportunity to speak to it—I believe for the first time in this House—and to take the opportunity to commend both ministers for hosting this evening. Minister Fonseca will, sometime in the not-too-distant future, be introducing new legislation—a bill in this House—to help us better address the special needs of our live-in caregivers. But I do want to commend both Minister Fonseca and Minister Wynne for taking it upon themselves to host a meeting on a Saturday night. This was not part of any formal committee consultation process. They took it upon themselves to do this, which I commend them for. They wanted to meet with live-in caregivers to hear some of their stories and to share with them some information about how they might assert their rights. I thought it was an important thing to do, and I commend them for taking those steps.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: The Premier is not only commending them; he was laughing about the ministers' failure to react to the plight of vulnerable women. That's the real story here.

Premier, your position on this, in contrast to your holier-than-thou attitude with respect to ministerial conduct when you were in opposition, has to raise eyebrows about real motivation. Your ministers weren't raised in a cabbage patch—at least not the Minister of Education; she knew that what she heard was a bombshell.

According to the media, she implored the nannies to tell their story. When they did, with their shocking revelations about a well-known Liberal, you would have us believe she simply posed for a photo, gave them a 1-800-GET-LOST number and went home to bed. Do you understand that that is simply not believable? What really happened here? Who did they contact in your office, and when was that contact first made?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I learned about this, and I can confirm that my office learned about this, when it appeared in the media. Again, let's understand what was happening here: Both Minister Wynne and Minister Fonseca had agreed that it would be a good thing to host a meeting in Minister Wynne's constituency office on a Saturday night. A number of live-in caregivers told their stories that night, which is the first opportunity they ever had to deal with persons of authority and to relate those stories.

Ministers Fonseca and Wynne received them, and welcomed those stories as they welcomed the individuals into Minister Wynne's office. They then told them that there was a particular number they might phone to pursue this particular issue. I think they heard some 30 stories that evening.

This was the second such event attended by Minister Fonseca. Again, I want to commend him for getting out into the community and better understanding the needs that are out there. That will better inform the legislation we will introduce in the House.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: The Premier and his friends like to portray themselves as the defenders of the downtrodden. Here's a case that puts the lie to that portrayal. When it comes to acting on serious allegations of abuse against women unable to defend themselves or protecting a Liberal, they chose protecting a Liberal. The Premier says that's okay; it's just a tin ear problem. I think your endorsement of your Liberal ministers' moral and ethical failures reveals the phoniness of your concern for the disadvantaged.

Premier, once again, let us know how you can defend the moral and ethical failures of your ministers. Why have your standards dropped so far, now that you're on that side of the aisle? Why have they changed so much?

1040

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, so we understand, the purpose of the meeting was to give live-in caregivers

the very first opportunity, I believe in many if not all the cases, to speak to persons in authority, to better acquaint them with their rights and to listen to their stories. Part of the information that was provided by Ministers Fonseca and Wynne covered the following. There was a letter that was handed out to everybody there that answered these questions: "What are my rights at work?" specifically with respect to limits on hours of work, overtime pay, minimum wage. It answered questions like, "Can my employer deduct room and board meals?" "What about this whole idea of public holidays, pregnancy leave, family medical leave, vacation with pay, termination notice?"—all those kinds of things. All those were made available to all those who attended. Again, I think it was the appropriate thing to do in the circumstances.

PROTECTION FOR WORKERS

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: Back to the Premier, and again dealing with the nannygate issue and the decision of your ministers to keep quiet about shocking abuse allegations directed at a prominent Liberal. There are serious unanswered questions about what transpired at the meeting between the ministers and the nannies, what commitments were made, what assurances were given. We haven't been given meaningful answers in this House. Will you allow your ministers to testify before the federal committee looking into this issue? And if not, why not?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I do know that my ministers have received an invitation to appear before a federal parliamentary committee. I know that Minister Fonseca has already replied and has indicated that he looks forward to attending. I think that if there's anything at all that we might do together, the federal and provincial governments, to provide more support, better protection to our live-in caregivers here in Ontario, then we welcome that opportunity, and Minister Fonseca looks forward to appearing there.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: Well, we'll look forward to that as well.

Anyone following these proceedings up to this date in this assembly should be disturbed by the government's stonewalling, and that's what it's been: stonewalling. We have to ask, what are they hiding? What are they afraid of? Did these two ministers, after hearing shocking stories of abuse from two vulnerable women, women without a voice, simply walk away without care or concern when they heard a prominent Liberal was involved?

Premier, it's interesting that you're suggesting your Minister of Labour will appear before the federal committee. We'll look forward to that. Will you allow both of your ministers to appear before a provincial justice committee? Let's deal with the responsibilities of provincial members in the provincial assembly. Will you do that?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, I say to my colleague that the federal Parliament in its wisdom has seen fit to make inquiries about what we might better do together to

better address the needs of our live-in caregivers here in Ontario, and hopefully nationally as well. Minister Fonseca has agreed to participate in those proceedings, and I think that's the right thing to do.

Minister Fonseca has made himself available to the media and here in question period on a number of occasions to allow my honourable colleagues and members of the press to put questions to him and to explain his particular side of the story. I think we've had a full accountability and a full airing in that regard. I think what Ontarians want us to do, but especially what live-in caregivers want us to do, is to find ways to provide them with better ongoing protections. That's what we'll continue to work toward as a government.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: As I said before, the Premier likes to portray himself as the defender of the downtrodden. We're talking about the plight of individuals, immigrant women, poor women, vulnerable women. What we're suggesting here is that your ministers were that incompetent, that insensitive to the plight of these women, that they ignored their plight—that's what you're saying. If that's the case, according to the standards you said you stand for with respect to ministerial conduct, they should be gone; they should be fired; they should be turfed. But no, you're defending the indefensible, stonewalling the Legislature. It has to beg the question, who in your office was involved in keeping this matter under wraps? Was anyone in your office contacted about this matter following the nannies' allegations?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I said no before, and I'll say no again. The first time we learned about it was when it appeared in the paper. I think Ontarians need to know what we're talking about here. Notwithstanding the enhancements brought forward by my honourable colleague, we're talking about a couple of ministers who decided that on a Saturday night, quite separate and apart from any formal committee process, they might come together and invite Ontario live-in caregivers to come forward and tell their stories. They did that. They also apprised them of their rights.

My honourable colleague is now telling me that my ministers should have then taken it upon themselves to be selective in deciding which were worthy of prosecution and which were not, that we should circumvent due process. We think that's wrong. We think the appropriate thing to do in the circumstances is to apprise those women of their rights and to encourage them to follow up should they feel it is appropriate to do so. Again, I commend my ministers for the actions they took.

PROTECTION FOR WORKERS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Premier. I think the Premier would agree that his Minister of Labour has an ethical and moral responsibility to protect all of Ontario workers. This is especially the case as workers face the worst economic uncertainty since the

Great Depression. Yet when the Minister of Labour heard horrendous stories of abuse from caregivers while at a meeting hosted by the Minister of Education on April 25, he did nothing.

Does the Premier condone the Minister of Labour's complete lack of judgment?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I appreciate the question from my honourable colleague, but I don't share her perspective. The Minister of Labour did what he should have done. In fact, he went beyond that in terms of setting up this meeting in the first instance to meet with live-in caregivers.

We just believe in the importance of due process. We think that it's not incumbent upon ministers to decide which complaints, which stories and which allegations are worthy of further investigation and perhaps even prosecution. There is a separate, independent arm of the government made up of bureaucrats who are charged with those special responsibilities. Just as it would be inappropriate for us to direct the police, it would be inappropriate for us to direct investigators and prosecutors in this particular matter. That's why the appropriate thing to do is to provide women with knowledge of their rights.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The minister didn't hand off the information to bureaucrats; that's the problem. The events of April 25 raise serious doubts about the competence of the Minister of Labour and about the political will of this government to enforce its own Employment Standards Act. Quite frankly, the minister's unwillingness to take action to protect these vulnerable caregivers mirrors the inaction of his ministry as a whole to protect Ontario's workers.

Ontario workers need a Minister of Labour who cares. Ontario workers need a Minister of Labour who will uphold his ministry's legislation. When will we finally get one?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: We have one. That's why he devoted a Saturday night away from his family to meet with live-in caregivers: so he could give them an opportunity to tell their stories, so he could get a better understanding of the nature of their challenges, so he could better inform the bill that we intend to table in this House and so he could also seize the opportunity to apprise these women of their rights. That may not be enough for the members of the opposition, but I think it is exactly what a minister of the crown is supposed to do.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I would submit that the minister's responsibility is to protect the rights, not just apprise the workers of their rights. A minister responsible for protecting the rights of all Ontario workers who hears stories of abuse from caregivers and thinks it is perfectly acceptable to do nothing other than give them a not-in-service, toll-free number is not up to the job. The minister didn't follow up with the deputy, which would have been the responsible and the right thing to do.

How can this Premier continue to defend the minister's gross failure to uphold his own Employment Standards Act?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, I just think that the standards and the values that we have to bring to bear

here are those of the people of Ontario. Do they have an interest in ensuring that their government does what is necessary to recognize and better protect the needs of our live-in caregivers? I think the answer to that is yes. Do they expect that our ministers of the crown will respect due process? I think the answer to that is also yes. Did the ministers of the crown, in this particular instance, act responsibly, meeting on a Saturday night, listening to those stories, using those stories to better inform our legislation and apprising these women of their rights? Again, I think that they acted honourably and in keeping with the values and expectations of the people of Ontario.

1050

PROTECTION FOR WORKERS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Back to the Premier: Last Wednesday, Vera Trevisanello was at Queen's Park to tell her story of discrimination in the workplace. The story she told was of an Ontario where it is acceptable for employers to fire new and expectant mothers.

Why does this Premier continue to stand by a labour minister whose ministry consistently fails to protect Vera and dozens of women like her?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Let me just take this opportunity, first of all, to thank the honourable member for raising a very important issue, and to make a statement on behalf of all members present. I am confident in saying this: It is against the law for an employer in Ontario to discriminate against women because they happen to be pregnant. It is against the law to dismiss expectant mothers. I want to be very clear on that score. If that is in fact taking place anywhere in the province of Ontario, we will do what we need to do to ensure that the full force of the law is brought to bear on those employers. We would also encourage all women who are experiencing that kind of discrimination to make their complaints known through the appropriate channels, to make sure that the officials can follow up on those complaints.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: This weekend I was contacted by another mom, Beverley Stiles, and here's what she wrote: "I was to return to work full-time at the end of January when my employer had told me earlier to find a new job, that he didn't have room for me any longer. But in the end of January, he took me back, but only 16 hours a week and every third weekend. I filed a claim with the labour board almost two months ago and I am still waiting for them to investigate further. In the meantime, I am stuck trying to pay the bills and to put food on the table. I am almost to the point that I am having to turn to the food banks to get food to feed my 15-month-old son."

Given what we've seen from the Minister of Labour, how can this Premier expect women like Beverley, Vera and others to have any confidence at all that in fact their rights are being protected in the province of Ontario?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Labour.

Hon. Peter Fonseca: We are all hurt when we hear a story like that. I know, as a husband, as a father of two

three-year-olds, that when my wife took time off work on mat. leave to take care of our children, she had the safety and security of knowing full well that her employer would take her back once that mat. leave was done.

As the Premier has said, it is illegal to discriminate against any woman who is pregnant, who is on parental leave. We will use the law to make sure that these employers are held to account. I encourage anybody who is in this situation to contact the ministry. Our—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I think that the women of this province deserve a labour minister who feels more than hurt. We need a labour minister who does his job and protects their rights.

Here is the reality facing vulnerable workers in Dalton McGuinty's Ontario: New and expectant moms are fired; caregivers alleging workplace harassment and abuse are ignored; and the minister in charge shows lack of judgment, fails to protect women, and refuses to do his job. Why is this Premier continuing to stand by an incompetent minister who presides over a dysfunctional ministry?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: Any employer that illegally fires a pregnant woman or mistreats that individual will be penalized to the full extent of the law. That's what we have in Ontario: provisions, protections to help these workers, to ensure that their parental and pregnancy leave is treated to the full extent of the law, to allow them to take care of their children with peace of mind, knowing full well that their job is there once they come back.

As Minister of Labour, I will continue to advocate and make sure that these women are protected and that their jobs are in place once they're done with their parental leave.

WINE INDUSTRY

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: My question is to the Premier. The Toronto Star reports that the Minister of Agriculture supports selling fruit wine in farmers' markets. The Ontario Federation of Agriculture strongly supports this, and the industry itself supports it. The parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Agriculture spoke in this Legislature—on behalf of the minister, I presume—and fully supported selling fruit wine in farmers' markets. The Legislature unanimously supported second reading of Bill 132, which was introduced by our leader, Bob Runciman, and allows the sale of fruit wines in farmers' markets.

Premier, are you the only person holding this up?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Government Services.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: The Ontario government has traditionally sought to achieve a balance between offering consumers greater choice in purchasing and consuming alcoholic beverages while at the same time ensuring social responsibility and public safety. At this time, the government has no specific plans to allow the sale of fruit wines at farmers' markets. We believe, and continue to advocate, subject to whatever happens in the Legis-

lature, of course, that fruit wine producers have the same rights and opportunities as others. It's really a fairness issue. If we were to go down that route, the producers of grape wine would—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Premier, the minister referenced the fact “subject to whatever happens in this Legislature.” I did mention in my question that the Legislature unanimously supported selling fruit wines in farmers' markets. The main problem that our fruit wine industry is having is their inability to get their product to the consumer. Bill 132 would solve that. It would help farmers' markets and the fruit wine industry.

Premier, this bill passed second reading five months ago. In that time, your government has done nothing, and now the fruit wineries are going bankrupt. How many wineries need to go bankrupt before you bring forward Bill 132? Will you commit to bringing it forward for third reading today and get on with it, and save our fruit wine industry?

Hon. Ted McMeekin: I just want to say that I don't know why the party opposite, when they were in government, didn't act on this. Maybe they had some similar concerns to ours. Fruit farmers are already permitted to operate wine retail stores on their production sites, which provides an opportunity to supplement their agricultural businesses with value-added manufacturing. There are also a number of other options for the retailing of fruit wines. For example, fruit wines may be sold through the LCBO Go-to-Market program, direct-delivery sales to liquor licensees and through on-site manufacturing retail stores, as is currently permitted in the legislation for all producers of wine right across Ontario.

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: My question is to the Premier. The Employment Standards Act is designed to defend the rights of workers who are not protected by a union, yet in Dalton McGuinty's Ontario, the Employment Standards Act has become toothless. Across Ontario, employment standards inspectors are currently working on files that were filed in December 2007. Just to put that in perspective, if a worker asks the Ministry of Labour to investigate unpaid wages, unfair dismissals or gross violations of contracts, workers are forced to wait up to 18 months to have their file reviewed.

Why is the Premier not enforcing his own Employment Standards Act?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Labour.

Hon. Peter Fonseca: We've heard from many members in this Legislature, and many have great points to bring forward about how we can improve our labour and employment standards in the province of Ontario, and we continue to listen and to receive that information and get to work on it.

In this 2009 budget, we have just put \$4.5 million more into employing more employment standards offi-

cers in the province of Ontario. Those officers are doing a commendable job. They're retrieving many of those funds owed to those workers through claims that are being put forward through our employment standards office. That employment standards office, after many, many years, has been modernized and updated—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

1100

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Under his watch, Mr. McGuinty's labour minister has, in fact, deferred gross violations of employment standards to a 1-800 number. The call centre makes an initial call back, and then 18 months go by until investigators examine the case. This is the standard under Dalton McGuinty's labour ministry: Defer all allegations of employment standards violations to a 1-800 number. This is shameful and unacceptable.

Why won't the government take responsibility for properly investigating the Employment Standards Act of Ontario?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: I will not take lessons or lectures from that member when it comes to protecting vulnerable workers in this province. But what I will do is share with that member the progress that we've made when it comes to employment—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Next time I won't stop the clock, member from Durham, and you might want to be in your seat too.

Minister?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: Let's do a quick compare and contrast. Between 1989 and 2003, there were a grand total of 97 Employment Standards Act prosecutions initiated; that is, in 14 years, between that party and that party. Since 2004, there have been almost 1,700 prosecutions completed. I think that speaks for our record of how we're protecting vulnerable workers—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Ms. Laurel C. Broten: My question is for the Attorney General. Last Thursday, this House passed Bill 133, the Family Statute Law Amendment Act, the first significant reforms in Ontario's Family Law Act in over two decades.

As a former family lawyer, I know first-hand that these amendments will now make the law fairer for families going through the anguish of marriage breakdowns. It will allow families to spend less time and money on court proceedings and more time getting on with life, and will help ensure the best interests of the children are protected in custody decisions.

I particularly want to highlight the important changes that this bill brings to better protect victims of domestic violence. Can the Attorney General please provide details as to how restraining orders are going to be stronger as a result of Bill 133?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: It's a very important issue for all Ontarians. All Ontarians deserve to be able

to live their lives free of fear, free of violence. Women and children are specifically targeted in the domestic context. For years, that has been acknowledged throughout the province of Ontario.

Bill 133, which this House passed just last week, will make sure that those living in fear, those who might be the subject of violence, are able to get restraining orders faster. They will expand the situations in which they are available to those who've been living in a relationship for three years. They'll also be enforceable under the Criminal Code, which is where serious issues of violence should be enforced.

I am pleased that this House—at least the Liberal members—unanimously supported Bill 133.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Laurel C. Broten: The importance of criminalizing breaches of restraining orders and allowing for tougher enforcement by police is critical to better protect women and their children. I know from my work on the McGuinty government's domestic violence action plan that advocates have been seeking reform on the issue of restraining orders for many years, but no government has, until now, successfully tackled this important reform. This reform must now come into action.

Attorney General, how are these changes going to come into effect to make a real difference in women's lives?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: I want to express a thanks to the Premier for the domestic violence action plan and to my colleague from Etobicoke–Lakeshore, who did so much of the work on that plan, which is a broad range of initiatives which have ensured that women and children's lives are safer and that where issues are raised, they get to court faster and more effectively.

This bill speaks to an issue that's been raised in this House for more than a decade. This bill speaks to an issue that's been on the minds of Ontarians. This bill speaks to an issue that's been raised by advocacy groups from Ottawa to Windsor to Thunder Bay, north and south. This bill speaks to an issue that all in this House have said needed to be addressed, but when the time came for it to be addressed, one party stood up for women and children—that was this party—and the other parties, well, they're absent without leave. We stand up for those we protect.

DOCTOR SHORTAGE

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: My question is for the Minister of Health. According to the Hamilton Spectator on May 9, "Doctors in Hamilton and across the province say" your decision to impose a hiring freeze without warning on April 17 on doctors joining primary health care practices is "wreaking havoc with recruitment at the most crucial time of the year as medical school graduates decide where to practise." This also puts at risk the ability of these practices to take on more of the almost one million patients who are waiting for care.

Will you, Minister, lift the hiring freeze today?

Hon. David Caplan: I want to thank the member for an important question. Regrettably, some of the things that she mentioned in her preamble are simply factually incorrect.

We're reviewing the primary health care model to ensure that we support health care providers in the most effective and responsible manner. We are reviewing this and are determined to have it resolved as quickly as possible. That's why we're moving forward with 50 more family health teams over the next two years, targeting rural and underserved communities. For the member's edification, she's going to be hearing more about this because that's on top of the 150 family health teams that we've created—teams of doctors, nurses and other health professionals working together to provide better care.

Family health teams are already providing care to over two and a half million Ontarians since their introduction, including more than 200,000 Ontarians who previously did not have—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: It's obvious that this minister isn't listening to the doctors and those throughout the province of Ontario at the medical schools who are very concerned about this hiring freeze that was announced on April 17—just an indication of poor planning on the part of this minister.

I would say to you, medical graduates have told me that they're making decisions now as to where they're going to practise at a time when we need every one of them. What you have done is forced them to start looking elsewhere. They can go to Manitoba; they can go to Alberta and British Columbia. They all need doctors too. So at a time when you talk about bringing down emergency room wait times, you're making decisions that are increasing wait times and you are delaying access to care for patients.

I ask you, will you ensure that you get rid of the anxiety and lift the freeze today?

Hon. David Caplan: In fact, I disagree with the premise of the member's question. I think she's simply wrong. We're reversing years of inaction by previous governments to boost access to doctors and family health care in the province of Ontario. Today, there are almost 1,800 more doctors in Ontario than when we began in 2003.

It was this government that began the work of fast-tracking international medical graduates so they could get into practice—it was this government, under the opposition of the member opposite and her colleagues to expand medical school spaces in the province of Ontario. I don't think anyone in this House will accept any lecture from this member given the sorry record that she and her colleagues had when it came to providing access to needed medical services in the province of Ontario.

There is an administrative review which is going on. It will be dealt with as quickly as possible. Of course, we'll continue to get more family health teams, more nurse practitioner-led clinics—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

WORKPLACE SAFETY

Mr. Paul Miller: My question is for the Premier. Premier, the Minister of Labour has not only fallen down on the job in protecting the employment standards of Ontario workers, he has failed to fix the workplace safety and insurance system that is failing injured workers in our province. This perverse system, through its experience rating program, rewards companies for hiding workplace injuries—as many as 25,000 injuries in 2007 alone.

When will the Premier finally put in place a Minister of Labour with the competence required to fix the broken WSIB system and offer Ontario workers the protection they are due?

1110

Hon. Peter Fonseca: The member's question around experience rating is quite right. This is a very, very important program. Experience rating is a program in place by the WSIB that is being reviewed today.

For those who don't understand what the program's all about, it's about incenting good behaviour. It's about creating a culture of workplace health and safety. This is a program that we want to ensure is working well because it will have a tremendous impact on what our number one goal is: lowering lost-time injury rates in the workplace and ensuring that we don't have fatalities in the workplace. The only way to do that is to have employers with a good experience rating program in place, working with employees, working with labour, together to—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Paul Miller: Not only are companies hiding injuries; the compensation system is condemning thousands of injured workers to poverty and destitution. Studies show that as many as two thirds of men and women who work hard and are injured through no fault of their own are being punished in a life of poverty. Once again, the Minister of Labour is standing idly by while the workers of Ontario are suffering.

When will this Premier do the right thing for injured workers and fix the flawed and deficient WSIB system once and for all?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: On this file around experience rating, the WSIB has taken leadership. Morneau Sobeco has provided a report with a number of recommendations. Within the WSIB, a special advisory committee has been set up by the board of directors.

Here's what Clive Thurston, president of the Ontario General Contractors Association and industry task force member, has to say about how Ontario is doing: "I am not aware of any other country that excels at health and safety like Canada does and in particular Ontario."

We have a commendable record, but we have much more to do, because any injury, any fatality, is one too many. We've lowered lost-time injury rates in this province by over 20%. We will continue to make progress and ensure the health and safety of Ontario workers.

LABOUR MOBILITY

Mr. Jim Brownell: My question is to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. A recently released report from Ontario's Workforce Shortage Coalition indicates that the province's private sector includes a higher share of industries with high-skilled workers than the US. At the same time, the Conference Board of Canada estimates that even with strong immigration levels, Ontario could be short more than 360,000 skilled employees by 2025 and more than 560,000 by 2030.

In my riding of Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry, I frequently hear from business owners and employers that they are having difficulty finding skilled workers to fill available positions in their companies. I also hear from frustrated new residents in my riding who encounter many obstacles when they apply for jobs in their areas of expertise. It can be very difficult for workers trying to find these jobs.

Minister, at a time when Ontario needs skilled workers, what are you doing to ensure that Ontario employers have access to a deep pool of qualified candidates?

Hon. John Milloy: I thank the member for the question. Members of the Legislature may be aware that at last year's Council of the Federation meeting, all Premiers, including the Premier from Ontario, committed to ensuring labour mobility becomes the norm for workers in regulated occupations.

As a follow-up to that decision by the Premiers, last week I was pleased to introduce legislation, the Ontario Labour Mobility Act, which, if passed, would remove barriers to opportunities for workers in industry. It would mean that an individual certified in another province or territory will not have to complete any additional training, experience, examinations or assessments in order to be certified in the same occupation in Ontario. For businesses, it will help address critical skills shortages and improve their competitiveness, and for workers, it will eliminate delays involved in certifying workers in Ontario who are already certified elsewhere in Canada.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Jim Brownell: I'm glad to hear we are making it easier for skilled workers to have their credentials recognized. Here in Ontario, we pride ourselves on maintaining high standards. These standards ensure that the best of the best are teaching our children, ensuring our drinking water is clean, and building safe, energy-efficient homes.

I understand that in some cases Ontario's training and education standards are higher than those in other jurisdictions, and vice versa. For instance, the Quebec legal system differs from the rest of Canada. Therefore, lawyers trained in Quebec are only familiar with their civil law systems, while Ontario and the rest of Canada use the common law system. This makes it impossible for Quebec lawyers to find employment in Ontario without further training. Could the minister tell me how this proposed legislation will balance the free flow of workers while maintaining Ontario's commitment to excellence?

Hon. John Milloy: The member raises a valid concern. We certainly recognize that some training standards in regulated occupations are vital to protect health and safety, and therefore our government remains committed to making sure that labour mobility is balanced with continued protection of public health and safety.

Exceptions to labour mobility in certain circumstances will be allowed in order to protect the health and safety of Ontarians, but I should stress that at last year's meeting all Premiers agreed that these exceptions would be rare and that provinces and territories would work to put forward as few exceptions as possible and also work together to better harmonize the standards so that full labour mobility would take place.

Labour mobility is about strengthening economic competitiveness and removing barriers to economic opportunity. We are working with regulatory authorities in Ontario and all governments across Canada to ensure full labour mobility does not—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

TAXATION

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: My question is for the Premier. In light of the response we just had, this is a very important question about labour mobility.

Premier, as you're well aware, the auto sector and Oshawa have been substantially hit with job losses, and with the truck plant closing this month it's going to be impacted even more. We realize that all are doing what they can, but the latest budget is listed as costing Oshawa and the region of Durham more than 1,200 additional jobs coming in. And the people in Oshawa would like to know, what is it that the PST workers are going to do in Oshawa once the HST has been fully implemented?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Economic Development.

Hon. Michael Bryant: I thank the member for his question. It's certainly not the first one in which the member has come to the defence of his community, the industry in his community, and in particular the workers there.

As the member has alluded to before, the government's efforts to support and assist the auto industry also assist the suppliers and the feeder plants and allow for this industry to, long term, stay viable. This in turn will be of great assistance to the workers not just at GM, but at the feeder plants, as the member has pointed out.

I want to congratulate as well and acknowledge the work done by the mayor of Oshawa and council who were present at the GTA economic summit, about which I'll have more to say in my supplementary. But we will do everything we can to work with the member to assist the workers in his community being hit with these hard times.

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: Minister, the question was regarding the harmonization of the PST and the GST. Once the HST comes into play, the PST workers—of whom there are over 1,200 in Oshawa and the region of Durham—are going to be substantially impacted. These

workers need to know what's going to happen with their jobs once the HST is implemented, and we'd like to know that. Can you give us an answer, Minister?

Hon. Michael Bryant: Certainly I'm happy to sit down with the member and work with officials in the Ministry of Finance here, but especially with officials with the federal government, with whom we have been working closely to address these issues as we see the harmonization of these taxes, which is going to have an impact, as the member said, with respect to these workers.

We want to sit down and look at what we can do either in terms of training assistance, assistance directly to the community, economic development or new job creation, in addition to sitting down with the people and seeing what exactly they see their future as from their perspective as we engage in this transition from the current tax system to the harmonized sales tax, which I will say is going to have a massive and positive impact overall on the community, in this greatly export-oriented economy that we have, to increase the economy. But we still have to address these individuals whom the member has raised. I assure the member that we will—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

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WORKPLACE SAFETY

Mr. Paul Miller: My question is to the Premier. Once again, the Minister of Labour has failed to protect workers in Ontario. The latest failure is part of a larger pattern. It is a pattern that includes too many workers being injured, with no action on the part of this ministry. It is a pattern that has witnessed unacceptable waiting lists for investigations into employment standards issues. We know that the minister has failed to enforce his own ministry's laws and to protect nannies. How can this Premier continue to defend a minister with this kind of record?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Labour.

Hon. Peter Fonseca: I thank the member for the question. It gives me the opportunity to say, as Minister of Labour, that I've listened to, I've heard, hundreds of stories from injured workers, from families and friends who have lost loved ones in the workplace, from vulnerable workers, and that's what I'm going to continue to do. I'm going to continue to reach out to the community and make sure that we can put the right protections in place for these workers.

Our record has been one of very positive numbers in terms of lowering lost-time injury rates in the workplace: an improvement of over 20%. We have added over 200 inspectors to ensure that health and safety standards are being upheld in the workplace. We're going to continue to work for—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Paul Miller: I could go on about the failings of this minister in this portfolio. The WSIB experience rating program is a disaster and you know it. The practice of deeming is still there, and I've repeatedly called on this

minister to fix it, to no avail. The recent revelations about pregnant women and new mothers losing their jobs are very disturbing, and yet it has continued despite the minister's good words.

The minister is not up to this job, and Ontario workers are suffering the consequences. When will this Premier finally do the right thing and protect workers in Ontario and get rid of this minister?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: The most important thing that we are doing, as the government of Ontario, under Premier McGuinty's leadership is ensuring the health and safety of all Ontario workers and making sure that everyone who leaves their home for a hard day's work will come home safe and sound. That's why we have moved on a great deal of legislation here in this House to protect Ontario workers, and in particular, our vulnerable workers. We're going to continue to do that, and the best way that we do that is through consulting, through listening, through going out into the community and ensuring that we get it right for those workers.

This member may not be taking this issue very seriously, but I can tell you that I do as Minister of Labour, and this—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

BIOTECHNOLOGY

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: My question is to the Minister of Research and Innovation.

Minister, every year the government of Ontario and governments from across Canada and around the world gather at the world's leading biotechnology event, named BIO International, taking place this year in Atlanta. The BIO International convention is the largest global event for the biotechnology industry. It attracts the biggest names in biotech, offers an opportunity to secure investment and partnership opportunities, and provides insights and inspiration on the major trends affecting this pivotal industry. The event features keynotes and sessions from key policy-makers, scientists, CEOs and celebrities. Past speakers include President Bill Clinton, Michael J. Fox, Her Majesty Queen Noor of Jordan and General Colin Powell, among many others.

Minister, what are the government of Ontario's aims in attending this important international conference, and how many stakeholders and industry leaders will be participating with the government?

Hon. John Wilkinson: I thank my friend for the question. I'm pleased to be leading the Ontario delegation to BIO Atlanta this year. Team Ontario is delighted that the Premier will join us. There will be over 20,000 in attendance, and some 450 delegates from Ontario. I am especially pleased to announce that the Premier will receive the Biotechnology Industry Organization's second annual International Leadership Award.

This international award honours one individual each year from around the world who has shown a strong commitment to advancing biotechnology through policy mechanisms that facilitate and strengthen a country or a

region's innovation frameworks. It will be the highlight of team Ontario to be down there with the greatest—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: There is no doubt that jurisdictions around the world are making tough decisions in the face of the current global economic crisis. I know that our government's commitment to funding health research makes us a leader at BIO. In my own riding of Ottawa Centre, our government has invested over \$1.6 million at the University of Ottawa Heart Institute, the Ottawa Hospital Regional Cancer Centre and the Ottawa Health Research Institute. For example, our government has invested almost half a million dollars to investigate models of ovarian cancer at OHRI.

In these difficult economic times, some governments, shockingly, believe it's easy to cut science because it doesn't get a lot of votes, while some other governments have chosen to create their own future. As an example, the Obama administration has recently renewed the American commitment to scientific exploration. What policy measures in Ontario's success story will the government be highlighting to attract investment in this critical industry of the new economy—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

Hon. John Wilkinson: What you would do is exactly what our government is doing. In our recent budget, there was a commitment of some \$715 million of additional investments in regard to research and innovation. That brings the Ontario innovation agenda commitment to some \$3.2 billion. Specific things that we're doing in regard to venture capital: our Ontario venture capital fund; our new emerging technologies fund, some \$250 million; \$150 million for the biopharmaceutical investment program.

Just last week, I announced the new, \$100-million global leadership round in genomics and life sciences. Is it any wonder that Ontario is leading the world when it comes to biotechnology, that we have inspired leadership in this province that's being recognized now around the world?

We are looking forward to going to Atlanta, and we believe that we can come back with the jobs. The people of Ontario expect our government to act as a catalyst to achieve for our home province.

SCHOOL TRANSPORTATION

Mr. John Yakabuski: My question is for the Minister of Education. As a result of your failure to follow through on your oft-repeated promise to introduce a new funding formula with respect to rural transportation funding, school boards in Renfrew county have been forced to implement limited staggered bells.

No one likes this. Parents and students and teachers are against this. Municipalities have passed resolutions opposing this. The boards have proceeded reluctantly, only because you have threatened them with penalties if they don't comply with your order to cut transportation funding.

Keeping your promise would solve this issue. Would you commit to fair funding today for rural school boards and transportation or would you simply tell us what you have against students and families and people in Renfrew county and rural Ontario?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Quite the contrary. Our support for transportation in this province has increased every year, and if we look at Renfrew County Catholic District School Board, transportation funding has gone up 17.7% since 2002-03. Transportation funding for the Renfrew County District School Board has gone up 41.2% since we came into office.

What I will say to the member opposite is that we have worked with school boards across the province to put into place consortia so that there is a rational transportation process in the province, so that boards are working together to make sure that those transportation facilities are being used, those vehicles are being used, as efficiently as possible. It means that boards do need to work together, but we think that's a good thing.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. John Yakabuski: My goodness, the minister has been busier than Ruby Dhalla's nannies.

The staggered bell system may work in Toronto, but you need to understand that Renfrew county is nothing like Toronto. You need to get out of the city more. You need to see what it's like getting students to and from school safely in rural Ontario. Last week your government once again showed its bias against rural Ontario by voting against my gas tax fairness resolution.

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Minister, we're not asking for swimming pools. We're just asking for enough money to get our children to and from school safely and without putting them and their parents into unacceptable situations. It's time for you to step up to the plate and base funding on where the needs are, not where the votes are.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I've been to Renfrew county; I've seen the rural community that the member opposite speaks about. In fact, this year, rural boards have received \$131.6 million in new investment. That's in the face of serious declining enrolment across the province. What we have done as a government is we have continued to increase investments because we recognize that even when there are not as many students in the system now as there were a few years ago, boards still have those costs. Boards still have to look after their schools. Boards still have to have principals in their schools. In fact, the school foundation grant that we brought into the funding formula guarantees that any school a board deems viable will have a principal and will have a secretary. That's a major change from the funding formula the party opposite introduced that did not guarantee those resources at all. We have support—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

TAXATION

Mr. Michael Prue: My question is for the Premier. Earlier today, I sponsored a press conference highlighting

the concerns condominium owners and condominium boards of management have about this government's latest unfair tax grab. Costs of everything from contracted services like plumbing, landscaping and utilities will rise by 8% as a result of the dreaded HST. As you know, many condo owners are seniors living on fixed incomes who pay significant monthly fees for maintenance purposes. They cannot afford to pay more.

This tax grab will force people out of their homes by raising costs by 8%. Will this government listen to these condo owners and put the brakes on this wrong-headed tax grab now?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: As my honourable colleague knows, the single sales tax is part of a comprehensive package of tax reforms that includes both cuts to business taxes and cuts to personal income taxes. We firmly believe, after listening to so many representations from around the province, business and non-business alike, that the single most important thing that we can do to strengthen our economy and to create more jobs is to move ahead with this package of tax reforms that are part of our budget. My colleague knows, for example, that corporate income taxes will drop from 14% to 10%. That is a significant advantage for those people doing business, including for those in the condominium business, in the province of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Michael Prue: I cannot believe what the Premier has just said. You're talking about condominium owners as if they are all going to make huge scads of money. It's going to cost them money.

Linda Pinizzotto and Stanley Smith are here in the gallery today. They are, respectively, presidents of condominium boards, one in Toronto and one in Thornhill, and they've come here to say that the HST tax grab will hurt many thousands of Ontarians and may force people out of their homes. These are very serious matters. Condo maintenance costs will increase by a whopping 8% at a time when people can least afford it, and this government doesn't seem to care.

Why won't this Premier stop and listen to the people who have come here to give this message today and axe this tax?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: We need to level the playing field for Ontario businesses. One hundred and thirty other countries have in place the equivalent of a value-added or single sales tax. Those businesses enjoy an advantage over ours. It's time that we levelled the playing field.

Something my honourable colleague needs to keep in mind is that those people who are at present paying a provincial sales tax will qualify, going forward, for an input tax credit that will reduce their input costs. That will reduce the costs overall of the products that they're selling to the public. That will be an advantage to consumers. I know it's not easy working our way through this transition, but four other provinces have done this; 130 countries are already there. It's especially important for us at this time in our history that we move ahead with this package of comprehensive tax reforms to strengthen our economy and ensure that we can create more jobs.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. Khalil Ramal: My question is for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. The issues around long-term-care homes are known to all the members of this House. Also, these issues have been raised by my constituents on a regular basis. Recently, Minister, you made an announcement at the Ontario Association of Non-Profit Homes and Services for Seniors' annual general meeting about regulations that are going to come soon to protect vulnerable people: seniors, who worked very hard to build this beautiful province. Minister, can you explain this announcement to us and how it is going to benefit my constituents and all the seniors across the province of Ontario?

Hon. David Caplan: I want to thank the member for the question because it's a very important one. Members of this Legislature would know that the Long-Term Care Homes Act, 2007, received royal assent on June 4 but cannot be proclaimed until all the required regulations are in place. The development of these regulations is guided by the need to improve care provided to residents and the need for clear, enforceable standards that are consistently applied. The draft regulations are about safeguarding resident rights, improving the quality of care and improving the accountability of long-term-care homes. They reflect the recommendations made by Shirlee Sharkey.

Specifically, the regulations are about strengthening requirements for the prevention, early identification and treatment of potential areas of high risk, such as skin and wound care, continence care, fall prevention, pain management and responsive behaviours. They introduce clear definitions of abuse and neglect and strengthen accountability for investigating and addressing all alleged, suspected or witnessed incidents of abuse or neglect of residents.

The draft regulations call for increased requirements for appropriate use of restraints in our homes, and a requirement for infection prevention and control—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you, Minister.

There being no deferred votes, this House stands recessed until 1 p.m.

The House recessed from 1137 to 1300.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

ISRAELI APARTHEID WEEK

Mr. Peter Shurman: Today, I am asking members of this House to join me in condemning Israeli Apartheid Week by supporting a resolution I have filed. As members of this Legislature in a country that has consistently opposed to the apartheid regime in South Africa, we can no longer stay silent while the injustice of that regime continues to be diminished.

The term "Israeli Apartheid Week" is not only offensive to the fully democratic state of Israel—a state that respects the rule of law and human rights—it is also offensive to the millions of people who suffered under true apartheid in South Africa.

While there is room for discussion and debate on Israeli politics, to equate this democratic country with an apartheid state reflects a lack of understanding of the meaning of that word. Debate should be focused on facts, and forgo the use of terminology that serves only to demonize an opposing point of view and spread misinformation and hatred.

When I addressed this House on this matter in December last year, I said the term "apartheid" belongs in the same category as such terrifying words as "genocide." Today, I again want to stress that neither word should be used carelessly; otherwise, they will become meaningless and their true victims will be forgotten.

Recently, we commemorated the victims of the Holocaust. We all know that the central theme of any ceremony commemorating the victims of genocide is "never again." Today, I am asking the members of this House to condemn Israeli Apartheid Week and, by doing so, to ensure that victims of the apartheid regime in South Africa are never forgotten and the lessons of that terrible period in history are truly understood.

On behalf of the Progressive Conservative caucus, I deplore any equation of Israel with an apartheid regime, and I ask all members of this Legislature to join us in condemning Israeli Apartheid Week.

WARSAW WACKOS

Mr. Jeff Leal: Warsaw is a small rural community located about 25 minutes from the city of Peterborough. The Warsaw Caves Conservation Area and Campground is a popular tourism destination. Most people who know Warsaw automatically think of the caves unique to this area.

I rise in the House today to talk about another unique feature associated with the Warsaw community. I'm going to speak about a special group of women who are members of the Warsaw Wackos hockey team. Earlier this year, they were successful in being selected as one of the top 10 Canadian finalists in TSN's Bring Home the Cup contest with Mark Messier.

Every Wednesday during the winter for more than 35 years, this diverse group of women from all backgrounds and all ages has gathered to play hockey in Warsaw, Ontario. This team gives new meaning to the phrase "team spirit." Wednesday's Warsaw Wackos have a unique style of play that supports players of all skill levels. Their passion for the game is so strong that when a shift is over, members don't take to the bench; they take to the goal net. I'm told this can lead to as many as seven goaltenders in net at one time. This is community spirit at its best.

Congratulations to the Warsaw Wackos women's hockey team.

MUSCULAR DYSTROPHY

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I rise today to speak on the genetic disorder, muscular dystrophy, and how it affects those diagnosed in doing the things most of us take for granted, such as walking, sitting up, smiling and, ultimately, breathing.

Muscular dystrophy is a disorder that weakens the body's muscles. It is caused by an error in a specific gene associated with muscle function. The disorder weakens muscles over time, making it difficult to do the simplest tasks, such as crossing the street.

Today, there is no cure for muscular dystrophy, but doctors and scientists are working hard to find one, and that's where we can help.

Muscular Dystrophy Canada has launched the first annual Chair Aware Challenge. It is a fundraising campaign that will challenge able-bodied people to experience what life is like in a wheelchair. Their goal is to raise \$150,000 to assist those living with muscular dystrophy, and they're going to have lots of help making this happen.

The honorary chairperson of the campaign is 1010 CFRB's own Bill Carroll. Other personalities lending their time to assist muscular dystrophy are former Toronto Mayor Mel Lastman, 99.9 Virgin Radio's Mad Dog, Global TV's Leslie Roberts and CEO of the TD Bank, Tim Hockey.

I'm very pleased to be able to highlight the good work Muscular Dystrophy Canada is doing to help find a cure for this disorder, which afflicts approximately 50,000 Canadians.

To donate time or money to this worthwhile cause, please go to www.muscle.ca for details. I thank you for your support.

SCHOOL FACILITIES

Mr. Khalil Ramal: It's my pleasure to inform the members of this House about the new green jobs that are being created across the province of Ontario. Schools everywhere are being retrofitted, and no school board is being left behind. The Thames Valley District School Board is receiving over \$14 million to redesign how they consume energy. All areas of energy usage are receiving an investment, from conducting energy audits that help manage and conserve energy to designing new heating and air conditioning units that will save the schools millions of dollars.

Minister Matthews, Minister Bentley and I brought the announcement to the attendants of Blessed Kateri Catholic School last Friday. The students, faculty and community members were excited to be at the forefront of the green energy program. Many were satisfied that sustainable, well-paying jobs were coming to their city, as we were not immune from the mass layoffs and plant closures Canada has seen.

As well, environmental education is now part of the mainstream curriculum. It's important that we teach our

young people the necessity to be environmentally conscious from a very young age.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for allowing me to make this statement. I want to thank all the people who participated in this event, because it's very important to save our environment.

NURSING WEEK

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: It is with tremendous pleasure that I rise today during Nursing Week to recognize and pay tribute to our hard-working and dedicated nurses. I want to express my sincere appreciation to all the nurses for the exceptional and vital contributions they make to patient care in this province.

This event began in 1971, on May 12, the birthday of nursing pioneer Florence Nightingale.

Whether our nurses are considered respected, vital professionals caring for you or individuals that we can't live without, it is all true. Throughout our lives, nurses are there helping us. Public health nurses ensure people stay healthy by helping them quit smoking or eat well. Nurses in long-term care improve the quality of life for their residents. Registered nurses and RPNs in primary care clinics help people manage diseases like diabetes. Our nurses in hospitals work with people who are struggling with acute illness. And, of course, there are nurses who provide care at home so patients can be there with their loved ones. No matter where, throughout our lives, nurses are there to provide support to us. They are the heart of our health care system.

We urge the government to hire the 9,000 new nurses desperately needed, and we congratulate and thank them all for a job extremely well done.

ABITIBIBOWATER

Mr. Howard Hampton: Some \$1.25 billion of Ontario taxpayers' money has been put into the financial restructuring of Chrysler Canada to help sustain thousands of jobs in Windsor and Brampton. This is what I think people across Ontario, especially workers, expect, but people in communities across northern Ontario are asking why the McGuinty Liberals continue to ignore the similar financial restructuring of AbitibiBowater, where 4,000 good manufacturing jobs in northern Ontario are at stake.

The McGuinty government, rightfully, has paid attention to sustaining the jobs of workers at Chrysler Canada, but it seems to want to ignore those workers at AbitibiBowater. At the same time, the Quebec government has put \$100 million of debtor-in-possession financing into the financial restructuring, and the Quebec government will be at the decision-making table when it is decided which mills will be kept open, which mills will be closed and which mills will be sold. Yet the McGuinty government is nowhere to be seen when it comes to the jobs at AbitibiBowater.

People in northern Ontario are asking, if the McGuinty government could put \$1.25 billion of financial restruc-

turing into Chrysler Canada, why can't it also pay attention to the workers at AbitibiBowater in northern Ontario?

1310

PROFESSIONAL HOCKEY FRANCHISE

Mr. Mike Colle: As you know, over the weekend, the Premier of this province came out strong in favour of bringing a third NHL franchise to southern Ontario, making it seven in Canada.

This third franchise to southern Ontario would create hundreds of millions of dollars of GDP to the community chosen, whether it be Hamilton, Markham, Vaughan, Mississauga, Kitchener, Peterborough, Brantford or Oakville. Bringing the Phoenix Coyotes back to Canada would create high-paying jobs in construction, tourism, food, beverage, marketing, promotion, and hotel and restaurant industries. No matter which city is chosen, one thing is certain: A third NHL franchise in southern Ontario would positively impact on Ontario's economy and would create incredible excitement and economic development, all the while recognizing the world's most loyal hockey fans.

The potential is tremendous, and I hope that Mr. Bettman and the NHL owners do not stand in the way of these jobs and this hockey team coming to southern Ontario. We have been loyal hockey fans, we are the greatest hockey fans in southern Ontario, and we want the Coyotes here, Mr. Bettman.

RICK SHAVER

Mr. Jim Brownell: Today, I rise in the House to congratulate Rick Shaver, the general manager and co-founder of the Seaway News, as he was recently awarded the Canadian Community Newspapers Association Silver Quill. The Silver Quill is presented to an individual who has been an owner, publisher or executive officer of a community newspaper, in recognition of 25 or more years of service to the industry.

Rick was a student in my very first class at Cornwall's Viscount Alexander Public School back in 1969. He was active in school life then and remains a positive force today as one of the voices of the print media in his community.

Rick founded the Seaway News back in 1985 with his colleague Dick Aubry. Since then, the Seaway News has brought important local stories to its readers on a weekly basis.

To quote Rick, "We tell the stories of our community, the stories of our readers. In our paper, the school bake sale doesn't have to fight for space against the war in Afghanistan."

Community papers bring the news that is closest to their readers' hearts, and there will always be a place for them in Ontario.

Rick is also a past president of the Ontario Community Newspapers Association.

I want to commend both of these newspaper associations for the work they do and for the services they provide to our citizens.

The CCNA could not have chosen a more deserving recipient or one that is more dedicated to his craft and his community.

Next year is the 25th anniversary of Rick's labour of love, the Seaway News, and I'm sure he is planning to make this momentous occasion something special. I wish him well in the future.

INTERNATIONAL PLOWING MATCH

Mr. David Ramsay: I'm very pleased to stand in my place today to bring to the attention of all members that my riding of Timiskaming-Cochrane is scheduled to host the International Plowing Match during the week of September 21 of this year. Today, I want to give members and Ontarians an update on the progress of our community and government working together.

First of all, the McGuinty government has continued to provide support, on top of the \$1.7 million already committed in the 2008 provincial budget for highway improvements. These investments include \$75,000 for the Ministry of Culture's attraction fund; \$59,000 from the Ministry of Tourism, through Celebrate Ontario; and \$35,000 from the Ontario Trillium Foundation.

I'm very proud of my local communities. The logistics and the organization is very complex, including some 1,000 volunteers, 53 subcommittees and an expected 80,000 visitors. This event will truly be unique to northern Ontario and a unique northern experience, as the organizers will be showcasing life in the north, including mining and forestry exhibits and demonstrations, in addition to the agricultural displays and events. The Ontario Northland Railway will be making daily trips to the IPM site, and there will be a tent and trailer site that will accommodate close to 2,100 spots, with over 1,200 reserved to date.

Finally, I wish to congratulate the committee, the volunteers, the municipal leaders and surrounding communities who have dedicated their time and energy to this project. The website is www.ipm2009.net.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

REGULATED HEALTH PROFESSIONS STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 2009 LOI DE 2009 MODIFIANT DES LOIS EN CE QUI CONCERNE LES PROFESSIONS DE LA SANTÉ RÉGLEMENTÉES

Mr. Caplan moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 179, An Act to amend various Acts related to regulated health professions and certain other Acts /
Projet de loi 179, Loi modifiant diverses lois en ce qui

concerne les professions de la santé réglementées et d'autres lois.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The minister for a short statement?

Hon. David Caplan: In ministerial statements, Speaker.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

HEALTH PROFESSIONS

Hon. David Caplan: It's indeed a pleasure for me to rise in the House today to discuss legislation that, if passed, would lead to increased access to care, further interprofessional collaboration and enhanced patient safety for all Ontarians.

The amendments I propose to several health professions acts under the Regulated Health Professions Act, like the Nursing Act, for example, would expand the scope of practice for various health professionals. The health professionals covered under this legislation include nurse practitioners, pharmacists, physiotherapists, dietitians, midwives and medical radiation technologists. We're also proposing to revise authorities for prescribing, administering, dispensing, compounding, selling and using drugs in practice by chiropractors and podiatrists, dentists and dental hygienists, midwives, nurse practitioners, pharmacists, physiotherapists and respiratory therapists. This legislation, if passed, would allow these regulated health professionals to better utilize their hard-earned skills and training. It would help promote a health care system that is more efficient and more easily adaptable to new technologies.

I'd like to take a moment to thank Barbara Sullivan, head of the Health Professions Regulatory Advisory Council, for her recommendations with HPRAC. Barbara, your hard work has brought us here today and I want to say thank you very much. Please rise.

Based on the recommendations made by the Health Professions Regulatory Advisory Council, or HPRAC, we're taking steps to better utilize all of Ontario's health professionals. We're taking steps forward by optimizing the scope of nurse practitioners by removing some of the limitations on what nurse practitioners are currently authorized to do, like ordering X-rays; physiotherapists to communicate a diagnosis to a patient; dietitians to take blood samples from a patient to check blood glucose levels; respiratory therapists to independently administer certain substances—for example, oxygen; and pharmacists to extend or adapt prescriptions.

Ultimately, patient safety would be enhanced by strengthening the health professions regulatory system through these proposed legislative changes. The proposed legislation would increase teamwork amongst all regu-

lated professionals and build on existing, highly successful team environments.

Our population is aging and growing. A large portion of Ontarians will soon be placing ever-increasing pressures on our health care system. This new legislation will mean increased access to care for Ontarians. It will allow for more efficient health care services, more providers working together in teams, and an enhanced regulatory system that will increase patient safety. It will also remove barriers that prevent health care professionals from delivering services that they have been trained to provide.

This is a positive first step, and we plan to review other HPRAC recommendations in the future. Our goal is to ensure that Ontario's health regulatory system is responsive to the continuing changes to health care delivery. We believe in the need to make the best possible use of all the members of the health care team for the greater good of our health care system.

Thank you very much, and I hope that this legislation will be supported by all members of this assembly.

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CANADIAN INFERTILITY AWARENESS WEEK

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I rise today to recognize that next week is Canadian Infertility Awareness Week.

Becoming a parent is one of life's most rewarding and enriching experiences, one that many Ontarians take for granted. But for the tens of thousands of Ontarians who cope with infertility, their hopes for building a family are shadowed by anxiety, isolation and heartbreak.

Three years ago, the Infertility Awareness Association of Canada, an association that helps Canadians struggling to start a family, launched this international campaign so that people diagnosed with infertility would know that support and education are available to them. Our government, too, believes in the need to shine a light on this often unspoken matter.

Certainly, our hearts go out to those who suffer: to the woman who said, "After I had four miscarriages, my body was a mystery to me. Something wasn't working, but no test, no doctor, no treatment could reveal a definitive problem"; and to the hopeful mother who talks of "those two weeks each month spent between sanity and insanity, where time turns so slowly, it seems like an eternity." Even the simple question "Do you have kids?" can be devastating to those who want a child but yet have been unable to conceive.

We believe that everyone should have a fair opportunity to have a family. That's why, last summer, we established an expert panel on infertility and adoption to take the first crucial steps to see how we could better support people who want to start families.

The panel is exploring ways to make both fertility treatment and adoption more accessible in Ontario. This 11-member team—comprising adoptive parents, people who have had personal experience with infertility, and representatives from the medical and adoption commu-

ities—is chaired by David Johnston, a leading academic and president of the University of Waterloo.

I'd like to take this opportunity to thank all the members of the panel for their ongoing work and their commitment. I've met with them; they are knowledgeable, empathetic and determined to find just the right solutions.

Certainly, there is strong public interest in their work. As part of their in-depth research, the panel asked to hear from Ontarians on their personal experiences and views regarding infertility and the adoption system. We heard from 1,800 people who had struggled with infertility. Clearly, this is an important issue for Ontarians. I look forward to receiving the panel's recommendations next month.

As more women wait to begin their families, infertility is becoming more common. Today, one in eight couples struggles to build a family; one in six has faced infertility at some point in their lives.

People often think that infertility affects only women, but only half of infertility is solely related to women. Male infertility, unexplained infertility and combined infertility account for the other half.

The unnecessary shame and stigma of infertility often means that these Ontarians are suffering alone, in silence. This week is our chance to let them know that we support them.

There are many dedicated people in our communities who work hard to help Ontarians realize the dreams of parenthood. I'd like to thank them all. I'd like to thank the support groups that encourage and listen during a sometimes difficult journey, and the community organizations whose informed advice and guidance have helped so many Ontarians build their families, be it through fertility treatment or adoption.

During Canadian Infertility Awareness Week, there are activities organized around the country to engage and inform those struggling to start a family. For a list of activities taking place in Ontario, I urge you to visit the Infertility Awareness Association of Canada website, iaac.ca.

As a mother and grandmother, I know that having a family is life's greatest gift. I simply cannot imagine my life without my family.

Our government will continue to do our best to support those who want to be parents.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Responses?

CANADIAN INFERTILITY AWARENESS WEEK

Mrs. Julia Munro: I'm pleased to join in marking Infertility Awareness Week in Ontario.

I want to begin my comments with the fact that the Ontario government has appointed an Expert Panel on Infertility and Adoption to study the matter. As the minister said in her remarks, the fact is that this panel is set to provide recommendations to government in the next month. But I can't help but compare that to the Quebec government and Premier Jean Charest, who, during their recent election, promised to maintain Quebec's

leadership in Canada for providing support for couples facing fertility challenges. Just a few months later, the Charest government not only delivered, they exceeded that promise by announcing full funding for three in vitro fertilization cycles. I'm sure that this is welcome news for those in Quebec who find themselves in this very unfortunate position, both emotionally and otherwise. Certainly, I've received letters from many of my constituents who have made this kind of comparison between the recognition and the opportunity provided by the Quebec government and the silence that we have in Ontario on this issue. As the minister mentioned, the government did make a promise in 2007. We certainly await those recommendations becoming public.

But I also want to draw to the attention of the minister that receiving recommendations doesn't always guarantee, in our experience, that you are actually going to act on them. The important thing for people in Ontario is to be aware of this expert panel, but I, along with them, will be holding the government to account on making some kind of decisions, having received these recommendations. It forces me to ask if this is just another example of gesture politics, or are we really going to see something that supports people in the province?

HEALTH PROFESSIONS

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: I'm very pleased to rise on behalf of the Progressive Conservative caucus to respond to the new legislation dealing with the changes to HPRAC. This is a large bill and it's going to amend, I understand, some two dozen different acts. Of course, it's going to expand the scope of practice for many of our health professionals. That's somewhat ironic today, at a time when the government of course also has, as of April 17, imposed a hiring freeze on doctors joining new family health practices, and saying today that they encourage these interprofessional relationships—and yet we have a shortage of 2,700 physicians in the province right now. We've got about 2,600 doctors retiring and we have a freeze on the hiring of family doctors to family health teams. It's a little bit bizarre and contradictory.

Having said that, these changes, I think, on the whole are probably worthy of some very serious consideration. I know it's a huge task. I want to congratulate Barbara Sullivan and her team. I think she does very good work. I want to compliment her on the recommendations that she has brought forward. I think they have been very thoughtfully considered. We'll now wait to see what the reaction is of the stakeholders and, obviously, the public.

Certainly, taking a look at the nurse practitioner changes, I know there's some reason for hope and support. I do know that the RNO is somewhat discouraged by the lack of expansion of the scope of practice for nurses. Of course, if we take a look at pharmacists, obviously they are overjoyed to see the expansion of their scope of practice as well. I know the physiotherapists are quite happy; they've spoken to me. In the area of midwifery, where we have a crisis, any expansion is certainly worthy of merit.

So we will closely look at the changes that have been made. We appreciate, again, as I say, the role of Ms. Sullivan and the work that's been undertaken. It's a big job—I know from my experience, having served as Minister of Health—and we just want to make sure that at the end of the day our primary concern is that patient safety will always be foremost in the minds of everyone and that these changes do address that.

HEALTH PROFESSIONS

M^{me} France Gélinas: I'm happy to have a chance to respond to the introduction of this new health omnibus bill. There is no question that many of these changes are needed and are welcome. I would say that some of them are long overdue. I also want to add my voice and thank Barbara Sullivan for the good work that she has done and the many reports and the many pages of those reports.

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It is essential that our health care system has the ability to adapt in order to best serve the needs of its population and take advantage of the full scope of practice that our health professionals can offer. New Democrats welcome the basic spirit of this legislation, but we are concerned about some of the aspects of the bill and the many blanks that are yet to be filled. One example: This bill does not go far enough when it comes to nurse practitioners. Nurse practitioners are increasingly being relied on to deliver primary care in this province and have started to move into the field of hospital care. This is a good thing but must be reflected in the scope of practice.

The Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario and the Nurse Practitioners' Association of Ontario have pointed to two blatant problems in the bill: the failure to have open prescribing of medication for nurse practitioners and the authority to admit and discharge patients from hospitals, as fewer and fewer family physicians ask for privileges to do hospital work. New Democrats would like to see these gaps closed.

The other concern that I have is with the government plans for remote dispensing machines in Ontario. I am extremely concerned about the motivation and underlying goals of this aspect of the bill. While the minister is fond of talking about these machines as a tool to increase access to pharmaceuticals in remote communities, I have yet to see anything in the proposed legislation that would ensure improved access. I have been told that the decision as to where the machines will be will be left as a business decision. In my riding, where 80% of the land mass does not have access to a pharmacy, there is no business case to be made in Gogama, Mattagami, Foleyet or any of those little communities, so it leaves me a little bit uncomfortable that it's not going to help them.

How can this government be leaving such an important issue to a question of corporate profit and gain? Should not the needs of Ontarians in remote and rural communities take precedence over all else? What is the government's plan for ensuring that the legislative changes will have an outcome of better care for all Ontarians? All of these questions are left unanswered.

There are many more questions in this bill, and serious gaps, but, as has been the government's habit, it leaves far too much to regulations that we have yet to see. I look forward to working on this bill through second reading as well as at committee and seeing what the stakeholders have to say.

CANADIAN INFERTILITY AWARENESS WEEK

M^{me} France Gélinas: I'm also happy to have a few minutes to talk about Infertility Awareness Week. I'm happy to have a chance to rise today and speak about this important issue. There is no question that the families in Ontario who are coping with infertility need our support. All too often, these individuals and families are left coping on their own. We still have a long way to go before the issue of infertility can be talked about openly and in a supportive manner. We hope that infertility awareness week will move these important goals forward.

The issue of infertility is a very difficult issue, and it is something where, with Mother's Day having just passed, many of us can relate to the strong emotions that this issue evokes. I know that there is currently an expert panel reviewing the status of Ontario's fertility treatment services, and that is a good thing. The field of infertility has changed dramatically over the last 10 years, and Ontario needs to ensure the relevancy our services.

When it comes to the services offered, it is the role of government to balance the desire of infertility in individuals and families with the scientific evidence and best practice coming out of the medical world. Because right now, people seeking help always end up frustrated, exhausted and, most of the time, financially broke, we must ensure that families who have been searching for an answer to their infertility are not taken advantage of by the costly promise of yet another treatment that is not covered by OHIP. We must listen to the experts in the field and develop fertility treatment options that are tailored to and best for everyone in Ontario.

New Democrats look forward to the results of the Expert Panel on Infertility and Adoption to be shared this spring and for steps to be taken for quick implementation following this report.

VISITOR

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I ask the members to join me in welcoming to the east members' gallery Barbara Sullivan, the former member from Halton Centre from the 34th and 35th Parliaments. Welcome back to Queen's Park today, Barbara.

PETITIONS

PENSION PLANS

Mr. John O'Toole: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and with your indulgence, I would like to introduce Tim Eye,

who is the chair of the Durham labour council political action committee. His work on pensions is part of the petition I'm about to present, which reads as follows:

"Whereas General Motors has contributed significantly to the Ontario and local economies and was a significant contributor to the pension benefits guarantee fund (PBGF); and

"Whereas the General Motors of Canada salaried pension plan fund (plan 0340950) is severely underfunded due to the government's lack of responsibility in allowing policies (regulation 5.1, 'too big to fail' legislation) which permitted GM to underfund the pension benefit guarantee fund; and

"Whereas GM is experiencing severe financial problems and there is a potential for bankruptcy; and

"Whereas, unlike stakeholders such as vendors and suppliers that accept the risks associated with business, GM retirees and surviving spouses entered into their GM pension plans in good faith, based on the understanding that the funds set aside on their behalf would be secure; and

"Whereas GM salaried retirees contributed a percentage of their annual income to pension plan 0340950 and were permitted only limited contributions to RRSPs due to the federal government's CRA discriminatory RRSP restrictions for defined benefits pension plan members;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, support the GenMo salaried pension organization in petitioning the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to honour its commitment to totally fund the pension benefits guarantee fund; and

"That, in any approved restructuring plan of General Motors of Canada, provision be made that General Motors fully fund pension plan 0340950, and that General Motors continue to provide lifetime benefits to retirees and surviving spouses in accordance with employment entitlements and retirement agreements; and

"That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario take immediate action to protect GM pensioners."

I'm pleased to sign and support this petition.

ONTARIO PHARMACISTS

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: This is a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas physically present pharmacists have served the Ontario public well over the years by ensuring high levels of safety and care, the requirement for the physical presence of a pharmacist to operate a pharmacy and compound, dispense or sell a drug in a pharmacy should be left intact to protect the public interest;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"We request that the laws requiring the physical presence of a pharmacist to operate a pharmacy and compound, dispense or sell any drug in a pharmacy be left intact; specifically, clauses 146(1)(a) and (b), and 149(1)(a), (b), (c), (d) and (e) of the Drug and Pharmacies Regulation Act be left intact and unchanged, and

legislation should not be introduced which undermines the protections and service offered by physically present pharmacists."

I agree with the petition, will affix my name hereto and will give it to Zachary to be delivered.

CEMETERIES

Mr. Jim Brownell: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas Ontario's cemeteries are an important part of our cultural heritage, and Ontario's inactive cemeteries are constantly at risk of closure and removal; and

"Ontario's cemeteries are an irreplaceable part of the province's cultural heritage;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"The government must pass Bill 149, the Inactive Cemeteries Protection Act, 2009, to prohibit the relocation of inactive cemeteries in the province of Ontario."

As I agree with this petition, I shall sign it and send it to the Clerk's table.

TAXATION

Mr. Bill Murdoch: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas residents in Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound do not want a provincial harmonized sales tax that will raise the cost of goods and services they use every day; and

"Whereas the 13% blended sales tax will cause everyone to pay more for gasoline for their cars, heat, telephone, cable and Internet services for their homes, and will be applied to house sales over \$400,000; and

"Whereas the 13% blended sales tax will cause everyone to pay more for meals under \$4, haircuts, funeral services, gym memberships, newspapers, and lawyer and accountant fees; and

"Whereas the blended sales tax grab will affect everyone in the province: seniors, students, families and low-income Ontarians;

"Therefore, we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the McGuinty Liberal government not increase taxes for Ontario consumers."

I have signed this.

AIR QUALITY

Mr. Charles Sousa: I have a petition that reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ministry of the Environment ... conducted 22 months of ambient air monitoring and determined that the Clarkson, Mississauga, airshed study area was taxed for respirable particulate matter (PM2.5); and ...

"Whereas the study found that emissions of acrolein and acrylonitrile exceeded provincial limits; and ...

"Whereas the Ontario Power Authority is accepting proposals from companies for the operation of a gas-fired power plant in the Clarkson airshed study area that would see a new, very significant source of additional pollution into an airshed already determined as stressed by the MOE;

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"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That no contract be awarded by the Ontario Power Authority for the operation of any gas-fired power plant that would impact the Clarkson airshed study area."

I'll sign the petition and provide it to Alexis.

ONTARIO BUDGET

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm pleased to present a petition on behalf of the constituents of the riding of Durham. It reads as follows:

"Whereas the proposed harmonization of Ontario's retail sales tax with the federal GST"....

The added costs "would have a devastating impact in difficult economic times; and

"Organizations such as the Ontario Home Builders' Association have estimated that harmonization would add \$15,000 in taxes to the price of a new Ontario home.

"Therefore we, the undersigned, reject the harmonization of the GST and RST unless there are exemptions to offset the adverse impacts of harmonization so that the outcome will be a reduction in red tape, not higher taxes."

I'm pleased to sign and support this petition while, at the same time, I turn off my BlackBerry.

ROAD SAFETY

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the recently passed Bill 41 with regard to speed limiters on heavy trucks was passed without considering the effect on traffic flow, safety concerns and interstate trucking; and

"Whereas the speed of 105 kilometres ... creates a dangerous situation on our 400-series highways with consideration to the average speed of traffic flow being 120 kilometres per hour;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly ... as follows:

"That the Legislature suspend enforcement of the speed limiter law until the Legislature can review all studies conducted pertaining to the effect of this law and road safety concerns; and

"That the Ontario speed limiter law be amended from 105 kilometres ... to 120 ... to remove the increased risk of collisions on our highways and to prevent infringement on interstate trucking out of province and country."

I have signed this petition.

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Mr. Mike Colle: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the federal government's employment insurance surplus now stands at" over \$50 billion; and

"Whereas over 70% of Ontario's unemployed are not eligible for" the federal employment insurance program "because of Ottawa's unfair eligibility rules" for the people of Ontario; and

"Whereas an Ontario worker has to work more weeks to qualify and receives fewer weeks of benefits than other Canadian unemployed workers; and

"Whereas the average Ontario unemployed worker gets \$4,000 less in EI benefits than unemployed workers in" Prince Edward Island, Newfoundland or Nova Scotia, "thus ... not qualifying for many retraining programs;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to press the federal government to reform the employment insurance program and to end the discrimination and unfairness towards Ontario's unemployed workers."

I support this petition and affix my name to it.

GASOLINE PRICES

Mr. Bill Murdoch: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly.

"Whereas the skyrocketing price of gasoline is causing hardship to families across Ontario; and

"Whereas the McGuinty Liberal government charges a gasoline tax of 14.7 cents per litre to drivers in all parts of Ontario; and

"Whereas gasoline tax revenues now go exclusively to big cities with transit systems, while roads and bridges crumble in other communities across Ontario; and

"Whereas residents of Bruce-Grey have been shut out of provincial gasoline tax revenues to which they have contributed; and

"Whereas whatever one-time money that has flowed to municipalities from the McGuinty Liberal government has been neither stable nor predictable, and has been insufficient to meet our infrastructure needs;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to redistribute provincial gasoline tax revenues fairly to all communities across the province."

I have signed this.

ROAD SAFETY

Mr. Michael Prue: I have a petition that reads as follows:

"Whereas the recently passed Bill 41 with regard to speed limiters on heavy trucks was passed without considering the effect on traffic flow, safety concerns and interstate trucking; and

"Whereas the speed of 105 kilometres per hour creates a dangerous situation on our 400-series highways with

consideration to the average speed of traffic flow being 120 kilometres per hour;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Legislature suspend enforcement of the speed limiter law until the Legislature can review all studies conducted pertaining to the effect of this law and road safety concerns; and

"That the Ontario speed limiter law be amended from 105 kilometres per hour to 120 kilometres per hour to remove the increased risk of collisions on our highways and to prevent infringement on interstate trucking out of province and country.

I would affix my signature my signature thereto.

PROFESSIONAL HOCKEY FRANCHISE

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario signed by the Damoff family of Oakville. It reads:

"Whereas Maple Leaf Sports and Entertainment has the highest average ticket revenue per game in the National Hockey League; and

"Whereas the Toronto Maple Leafs are ranked the most financially valuable team in the NHL; and

"Whereas many Hamilton and greater Toronto area hockey fans are unable to attend professional hockey games due to a lack of adequate ticket supply; and

"Whereas the Hamilton and greater Toronto area boast the biggest and best market in the world for hockey fans, with Maple Leaf Sports and Entertainment bringing approximately \$2.4 billion to the local economy over 10 years; and

"Whereas a new franchise in the Hamilton and greater Toronto area is valued at \$600 million by some economists; and

"Whereas competition in both business and sports is healthy for both the Hamilton and greater Toronto area economy and sports team performance; and

"Whereas, despite having the most loyal fans in the world, the Toronto Maple Leafs have not won the Stanley Cup in over 40 years; and

"Whereas Hamilton and greater Toronto area fans deserve competitive professional hockey teams;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To request that the government of the province of Ontario express its strong support to the board of governors of the National Hockey League for the relocation or expansion of a second NHL hockey team in the Hamilton and greater Toronto area in order to realize the economic advantages to the taxpayers of the province of Ontario and to provide healthy competition to the existing Toronto NHL franchise."

I agree with this and will sign the petition.

ONTARIO BUDGET

Mr. Norm Miller: I have a petition with regard to the harmonized PST and GST. It reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the McGuinty government is planning to merge the 8% provincial sales tax and the 5% federal sales tax; and

"Whereas the new 13% harmonized sales tax will be applied to products not previously subject to provincial sales tax such as gasoline, home heating fuels, home renovations, haircuts, hamburgers, television service, Internet service, telephone and cell services, taxi fees, bus, train and airplane tickets, and dry cleaning services; and

"Whereas rural and northern Ontarians will be particularly hard hit by the harmonized sales tax, as will seniors and families;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the McGuinty government should remove this harmonized sales tax from its 2009-10 budget."

I support this petition.

CHILD CUSTODY

Mr. Jim Brownell: I've a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"We, the people of Ontario, deserve and have the right to request an amendment to the Children's Law Reform Act to emphasize the importance of children's relationships with their parents and grandparents.

"Whereas subsection 20(2.1) requires parents and others with custody of children to refrain from unreasonably placing obstacles to personal relations between the children and their grandparents; and

"Whereas subsection 24(2) contains a list of matters that a court must consider when determining the best interests of a child. The bill amends that subsection to include a specific reference to the importance of maintaining emotional ties between children and grandparents; and

"Whereas subsection 24(2.1) requires a court that is considering custody of or access to a child to give effect to the principle that a child should have as much contact with each parent and grandparent as is consistent with the best interests of the child; and

"Whereas subsection 24(2.2) requires a court that is considering custody of a child to take into consideration each applicant's willingness to facilitate as much contact between the child and each parent and grandparent as is consistent with the best interests of the child;

"We, the undersigned, hereby petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to amend the Children's Law Reform Act as above to emphasize the importance of children's relationships with their parents and grandparents."

As I agree with the petition, I shall sign it and send it to the clerks' table.

LONG-TERM CARE

Ms. Sylvia Jones: My petition is to the Parliament of Ontario.

"Whereas Ontarians who now live in long-term-care homes are increasingly older, frailer and have greater complex care needs;

"Whereas our elder parents, family and friends deserve to live with dignity and respect;

"Whereas the McGuinty Liberal government failed to revolutionize long-term care and broke its promise to seniors to provide \$6,000 in personal care, per resident;

"Whereas five years of Liberal inaction has restricted Ontario's ability to meet the demands of our aging population;

"Whereas more than 24,000 Ontarians are currently waiting for an LTC bed;

"Whereas Ontario funds significantly less resident care than Alberta, British Columbia, Manitoba and New Brunswick;

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"Whereas dedicated LTC homes are short-staffed and have not been given resources to hire enough front-line workers to provide the level of care residents require;

"Whereas devoted LTC staff are burdened by cumbersome government regulations;

"Whereas some 35,000 seniors are living in LTC beds which do not meet more home-like design standards introduced in 1998 by the former PC government;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the McGuinty government must enhance long-term care by:

"—initiating a sector-wide staffing increase of 4,500 full-time positions within a year;

"—expediting the redevelopment of Ontario's 35,000 oldest long-term-care beds by providing adequate support and funding;

"—achieving an average of three worked hours of personal care, per day, within a year;

"—simplifying the regulations which govern nursing homes;

"—producing a comprehensive plan with benchmarks to reduce LTC wait lists of more than 24,000 people;

"—addressing inflationary pressures by adequately funding the increased operating costs of LTC homes."

I support this petition and will affix my name to it.

OPPOSITION DAY

PENSION PLANS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I would like to move opposition day motion number 5, which reads as follows:

Whereas over 65% of working Ontarians have no workplace pension coverage;

Whereas the current economic and financial crisis has highlighted the weaknesses in the Ontario pension system;

Whereas the stock market meltdown has highlighted the negative impact on individuals near retirement saving solely on their own;

Whereas legislation currently under debate clearly states that the province has no obligation to ensure that the pension benefits guarantee fund (PBGF) can meet its commitments, potentially leaving tens of thousands of workers and retirees in the lurch and without a secure retirement; and

Whereas the underfunding of the PBGF means that members of underfunded plans may not even receive the \$1,000 per month minimum amount guaranteed, something that has never happened before in Ontario:

That, in the opinion of this House, the Ontario government should ensure that all Ontarians who currently lack a workplace pension have access to a decent retirement income by:

(1) providing a universally accessible, province-wide pension plan;

(2) fully backing the province's pension benefits guarantee fund so that all current Ontario pensions are fully protected. This would require an increase in the monthly benefit guarantee to at least \$2,500 as recommended in the Arthurs pension report; and

(3) ensuring that all pensions are fully portable and that plan members receive all monies paid into their plans, including all monies contributed by employers.

This is addressed to the Premier of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Ms. Horwath has moved opposition day number 5. Debate?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: It's my pleasure to be the first member of our caucus to be speaking to this motion, and I know that as the afternoon continues, we will have a number of other people from the NDP caucus rising in support of this motion, particularly our current pensions critic, Paul Miller, the member from Hamilton East—Stoney Creek.

I'm also very pleased that today in the Legislature we've had some people join us to support the motion by being here, and those are retirees and the members of a couple of different unions, particularly the CAW as well as the Communications, Energy and Paperworkers Union. We're glad to see that they're here listening to the debate today, because it's an extremely important debate. I say that because we know what's happening right now in this province. We know that there are hundreds and hundreds—probably thousands and thousands, in fact—of workers in this province who are very, very worried, who are very, very concerned that they are either on the brink of retirement right now or that they know retirement is coming sometime soon, and the pensions that they have been paying into all of their lives may not be there for them when they retire.

These are working people who have dedicated their lives, in many cases, to the work that goes on in the plants where they work. They work hard. They are loyal to their employer. They have put in year after year after year, and have put away some of their deferred wages. Instead of wage increases, they've taken those wage

increases and deferred them into pension plans, into defined benefit pension plans. These are pension plans that are guaranteed—supposed to be guaranteed for workers when they retire. A defined benefit pension plan means the benefit at the end is defined. There are no surprises. It means that you know exactly what it is that you're going to have as an income in your retirement.

That's why defined benefit pension plans are the most important piece of social legislation, if you want to call it that. They're the most important piece of our social safety net, if you want to call it that. Why? Because it guarantees that hard-working people of this province can retire with an understanding that they will have the income they need to be able to have a decent quality of life. What else does anybody want in their retirement years? What does anybody want once they've finished work, once they've toiled for decades at their place of employment? What else does anybody want but to know that once they retire, the income they're going to receive will provide for them a decent roof over their head, decent food on the table, a decent quality of life and a decent opportunity to be able to age, go through those golden years with dignity, with a good quality of life?

I don't think that's a lot to ask. I really do not believe that's a lot to ask. Unfortunately, we know that in the province of Ontario some 65% of workers do not have any pension plan whatsoever. So we know that 65% of the people of this province who end up retiring, and we see them in all our ridings, are people who didn't have the opportunity to have a pension plan when they were working. So now those workers are hitting retirement—especially now—and they've seen what little they were able to put away in an RSP, if they were lucky enough to do so, completely lose value because of what's happened in the market. Some of those workers who don't have a workplace pension plan were able to save a little bit through RSPs, but those RSPs have been flatlined because of what's happened to the economy.

A lot of workers don't have RSPs. A lot of workers weren't able to scrimp and save, because they weren't paid the wages. They weren't paid a decent amount during their working years, so they didn't even have the opportunity to put away any money whatsoever. So when they retire, what are they left to rely on? A totally inadequate Canada pension plan and the old age security system, a system that we know very well keeps senior citizens today, in this current year of 2009, living in destitution and poverty. There is no doubt about it: You cannot make ends meet. You cannot have a decent quality of life in this province with some meagre \$900 a month or so on old age security and Canada pension plan.

And you know what? There are workers in this province who are even further disadvantaged when you look at the Canada pension plan and the old age security system. Why? Because those workers, over their lifetimes, didn't have the chance to be able to pay into those systems like many other workers. Who am I talking about? I'm talking about women workers, many of whom in their lifetimes maybe didn't engage in paid work at all,

raised families, or maybe they engaged in paid work for a portion of their working career, which means they weren't maximizing their contributions into these systems. So these workers, women workers particularly, are seriously disadvantaged when it comes to the current environment in terms of our pension system, both the federal and workplace pension plans.

Immigrants who come to this country, oftentimes in their 30s and 40s, miss out, for many years, the opportunity to pay into the Canada pension plan or any other kind of pension plan for that matter. So we know that not only the Canada pension plan system but the Ontario pension system is wholly inadequate.

I think it's really obvious that the economic storm that we've been through in the last little while has simply opened up and highlighted the complete inadequacies of our pension system in this province. People are left worried about whether they can keep their homes, worried about whether they can maintain a decent quality of life—for no reason, not by reason of anything they did. They did what they were supposed to do. They worked hard all of their lives. They worked hard and they were dedicated, and they did the right thing. They joined a union, right? They bargained. They had part of their collective bargaining process put in place, employer pension plans, and they thought that when the day would come that they would need to rely on those pensions plans, they would be there for them. Not so, here in the province of Ontario.

1400

Unfortunately, what we've seen in this situation, as it stands right now in Ontario, is a government who, although—when I was first elected, I was the pension critic. I had the opportunity to travel around this province, I think it was, in the winter of 2004-05. I spent several months travelling to 10 or 12 cities in this province having round table discussions about Ontario's pension system. That was five years ago, and the government did nothing. I issued a report. The report spoke to a number of problems with the plan. At that time, the Ontario pension system—it had been 20 years since it had been reviewed. Now it has been 25. We know that the government has put a review in place and we have a report sitting on a shelf, the Arthurs report.

What we talked about back then, five years ago, were things like portability of pension plans; things like changing the pension benefits guarantee fund so that the minimum amount is increased from \$1,000 to \$2,500, so that it actually reflects what the workers who pay into their plans need, to top up if for some reason their pension plan gets wound up and it's underfunded, which we know is happening right now. We know it's happening everywhere. There are threats of it happening with GM and with Chrysler. We've seen it with steel. We've seen it in my own community, actually. We've seen it with GenFast in Brant. We've seen it in all kinds of situations—AbitibiBowater in northern Ontario—where workers are at threat of not being able to receive their full pension. So there's this fund that's supposed to top up,

and what we see is a wholly inadequate amount of top-up, which is \$1,000. We need that to go up to \$2,500. That's not new; that's something I was saying five years ago and something Harry Arthurs is now saying in his report—not that I agree with everything in that report, but there are some nuggets in there that I certainly support.

The issue is that this debate is not something that the government is prepared to engage in. In fact, all the government wants to do is punt the issue up to the federal government and say that it's a CPP issue, a Canada pension plan issue, and it has nothing to do with what's happening in this province. That's not where they want to go. I've got to tell you: The workers of this province want to go there and New Democrats in this province want to go there. We believe it's time to have a serious debate about the income security of people when they finish their working careers. We believe there need to be significant changes made. We believe they should have been made five years ago when the economic times were good. But at the very least, it needs to be looked at now, when so many workers either don't have a pension plan or see that their pension is not going to be there for them when they finish work.

It's unacceptable, and what's the response of the government? There has been two: "Punt it up to Ottawa because it's not our issue," or their second piece was to turn their backs on the pension benefits guarantee fund at the very time when workers need it the most. How shameful is that? This government—instead of saying, "We are going to make sure that fund is solid; we are going to make sure it's there for workers when they need it," they turn their backs and say, "This fund is never going to have enough money in it to help those workers." Shame on the government for a wholly inadequate response to the crisis that's hitting workers in this province right now. It is a shameful show of their lack of consideration, their lack of concern and their total lack of capacity to understand the fear and the worry that are in the hearts of workers across this province.

So, yes, we believe changes need to be made, and we're going to be putting on the record a number of specific things that we want to see changed in the pension system. A number of those things relate to the pension benefits guarantee fund. I've already mentioned one being the increase to \$2,500 monthly, but there are others.

I mentioned the crisis in the economy and how that has raised this issue and put it on the front burner, but this is not the only jurisdiction that's dealing with this. While the government of Ontario is saying, "This is not our problem; it's a federal issue," we see other provinces beginning to have a debate about this very issue. We see British Columbia and Alberta talking together about the possibility of a provincial type of pension plan. We see that right now. We see Nova Scotia engaging in that same kind of conversation. For some reason, the most populous province, Ontario, isn't interested in having this conversation, notwithstanding the fact that most of the

workers are right here in this province. So we're going to put on the table some ideas, because we think this debate needs to happen. We believe this debate should have happened a while ago, but it certainly needs to be happening now. We believe the province of Ontario has a significant role to play in upgrading our pension systems.

I want to put three specific issues on the table that I think we need to consider. I'm not saying we're going to design the system right here in this Legislature today. What I'm saying is, there are pieces of a provincial pension system that we need to look at, and they are serious issues.

One would be the issue of the 65% of people in this province who do not have a pension plan right now. Of those 65% of people, there are options that we have to consider in how we get them to have some kind of coverage.

Should the plan be a top-up option for those who already have a plan? So if you have a plan and it is a meagre one, should we put a plan in place and design it such that you can top up with an Ontario plan? Or should it be only for people who have no plan at all so that they can have something? There's an option that we have to decide upon.

Should it be a mandatory plan so that all workers and all employers should be paying in, so that they can make sure that everybody in fact has a minimal amount of a pension plan in their retirement? I know that BC is going one way in this particular debate. I think we need to think seriously about whether or not opting out is something that we would consider in designing an Ontario pension plan for Ontario workers.

Other issues: contribution levels. What does that look like? What would be the contribution levels that we would expect to be able to create a pension system in this province that everyone could rely on?

Those are three issues just off the top of my head. There are many others that need to be considered in the designing of an Ontario pension plan.

I know one thing for sure: It is absolutely unacceptable, absolutely inappropriate and absolutely reprehensible that the government of Ontario is not engaging in a very, very proactive way in what has become such a significant crisis not only in terms of our existing pension system, our existing pension act, but also in terms of looking proactively at how we make sure that as people finish their working careers, they are able to access some kind of dollars, some kind of financial security, through a pension system if it's not provided through their employer.

I'm going to end my remarks there because I know that my colleagues have a great deal to contribute as well in this debate. But I really want to emphasize one last time that New Democrats believe this is the time to have this debate. We believe it's incumbent upon this government to be proactive. We believe there are opportunities and that the government needs to seize the day and show the workers and the people of this province that they understand the fear and the worry that they face

today, not only workers who have current pension plans that are at risk but workers who are worried about the future for them and their families.

I would urge every member of this Legislature to take your position here seriously. This is a place where we create legislation, where we make positive change. If there's one place where positive change needs to be made in this province at this point in time, it's in the pension system and the capacity of people to retire with dignity and quality of life.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Further debate?

Mr. Wayne Arthurs: I want to speak to the opposition day motion, and I want to start just by reiterating something we all know: The economy of late has created a level of anxiety in Ontario, in Canada, and frankly, throughout the world. There are workers, there are retirees, there are families and, frankly, there are businesses and employers who are concerned with the economic state that we find ourselves in today. Certainly, this is driving a debate in a variety of areas, not the least of which is the matter of what happens to workers when they finish their employment, whether that be through retirement or, in some cases, because employment disappears.

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So this is a broad and intense discussion that is happening in a number of jurisdictions, not the least of which is and has been this Legislature. I would suggest that no party in this Legislature, and probably no member in this Legislature, has not been or will not be part of that ongoing discussion and debate.

And there are no quick and easy answers to be found. The reason there are no quick and easy answers is because each of those quick and easy solutions has consequences that have to be thoroughly and thoughtfully considered, have to be communicated, and have to be consulted on throughout this province.

It is not only because of the economic climate that we found ourselves in over the past year, but also because of this government's interest in and concern for the long-range needs of workers as they move out of the workforce, particularly into retirement, to provide some level of assurance in the longer term, that we are looking out for their best interests, that they are looking out for their best interests, and in a co-operative fashion, whether it be government, employers or workers, we find a means to provide that level of security.

I would suggest that is, in not the least measure, the reason that in the latter part of 2006, encouraged by the labour movement, encouraged by industry, encouraged by employers and government, we established and struck the expert commission on pension reform. Something of this magnitude dictates and demands that we draw upon those with expertise in the field, that we ask them to consult, that we ask them to seek advice and that we ask them then to prepare, through government, recommendations in the form of a report.

The expert commission on pension reform did just that. It consulted widely, over an extended period of

time, and provided a broad range of recommendations—some 142 recommendations, I believe, within the report.

Now, when a report of that magnitude, with such long-reaching and far-reaching implications, is received, it's not a situation where governments can act quickly or unilaterally. This talks about the long-term implications and the long-term needs of pension reform.

It is now part of our obligation to consult, in the context of these recommendations, with Ontarians and with the partners involved in this whole situation. Those include workers—those who are not in the organized labour force and those who are in organized labour—the business community, and our other partners. One of those other, major partners must be the federal government.

That is the reason why in this Legislature, over the past number of weeks at the very least, when questions have been raised about pensions and pension reform, particularly in light of the economic climate and specifically as it relates to the large automakers here in North America and Canada, the Premier has been quite clear and, I would suggest, steadfast in saying that we need to have that dialogue. We need to have that dialogue broadly, but to have that dialogue, we need to have it in consultation with our federal partners. That's why the Premier has written to the Prime Minister to ask for that engagement, to ask for that national dialogue that is so necessary. This is not just a matter for Ontario; it's a matter for Canadians in each provincial jurisdiction, and our federal partners as well.

There are a number of matters that will need to have consideration. I look to the recommendations within the motion.

The motion speaks specifically to “providing a universally, province-wide pension plan.” We haven't had that discussion. We don't know what the costs of that are, and we don't know who will bear those costs and how they will bear those costs. Each time we have discussions of this nature, we have to be cognizant of the potential implications to the taxpayer—not just those who contribute to the pension fund directly, but will there be implications for the taxpayer? To what extent will the taxpayer be expected to contribute, or not; to guarantee funds, or not; and to what extent are those who contribute to the plan responsible?

The second part of the recommendations speaks specifically to an increase, as recommended, to some \$2,500 from the current \$1,000 limit. We haven't had the debate about what the cost of that is. We haven't had the debate around what the contributory portions are, about who would make those contributions and whether there would be any expectation that taxpayers should be engaged in that process.

Full portability of pensions, as a third element in the resolution itself, is a complex matter. If you have portable pensions between companies and between different business elements, how much of the burden will be carried directly with the employer? How much of that burden will be the employees'? What is the cost of that transfer of responsibility on a new employer? How fully

are pensions portable between companies, between industries, and between public and private sector entities? Clearly those are the types of initiatives that need more than a cursory review. It's the reason that the expert commission was called into play to provide a series of recommendations for us to have that opportunity to consult.

We're anxious to engage our federal counterparts in this broad debate. I know the Premier is anxious for a national summit, so that Canadians can address the pension needs of those in the workforce and, frankly, opportunities for those who find themselves in the workforce without the benefit of a pension plan.

The province will, through its budgetary policies, continue to provide support for those who find themselves in a vulnerable situation. Certainly they include seniors, some on low pensions and some without any pensions. We'll do that through a great variety of measures, whether it be mechanisms to provide protection in their homes through property tax and property rental agreements, such that we are providing support where they need it. We'll continue with the enhancements we have already put in place in that regard as we move through this budget year and subsequent budget years.

We're all anxious for an ongoing dialogue, but that has to be a dialogue on an even broader basis than just Ontario. It clearly needs the engagement of our federal partners, and we certainly would anticipate that the continuing call by the Premier and others for that dialogue on a national level will only enhance the discussion we're going to have.

The consultation around the expert commission will continue as well. We need to look carefully at those recommendations so that we understand the implications, not only to workers but to employers, and not only to workers and employers but to all Ontarians—all those who will have some obligation in that regard.

I can suggest to you that we welcome the dialogue. Having said that, I'm not in a position, nor do I believe that members of our caucus will be in the position, to support the opposition day motion. Clearly when you come down to the very specifics of the recommendations that are before us, they're beyond this Legislature to support. It's beyond this Legislature to arbitrarily support the recommendations as they are put before us today.

I appreciate the time that is available to us for the debate today. I welcome the discussion that will occur on this floor so we can garner yet more ideas, and Ontarians can draw to our attention and to the attention of our federal counterparts the need for a national dialogue, and particularly a summit of the national leaders in respect to pension reform in this country.

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Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: I very much appreciate the opportunity to speak today. First of all, I must say, in dealing with the issue, that it's a very contentious issue in Oshawa, and as many would expect, we get a lot of calls on both sides of the issue. By any stretch of the imagination, it's far from unanimous either way.

It all comes down to how the process began and where it comes from, back from regulation change 5.1 back in

1992, I believe, when the government of the day, the NDP, came forward with the "too big to fail" issue. At that time, it may have been the perceived method in order to assist the companies, but the end result is that a lot of people have a lot of strong concerns now. I'm hoping that this legislation goes far beyond just the direct impact and actually addresses a lot of other aspects of pension issues province-wide.

After the issue of the regulation change 5.1 came forward, our government was in power, and at that time the number one question that I got on the line was very specifically, "Do we have to work another weekend?" When you're dealing with that aspect, when the concern comes forward, it's like, "We're not concerned about the pension issue." I never heard one concern about the issues being readdressed and funds being put back in, because the perception was—

Interjection: The economy.

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: That's right, because the economy was moving along wonderfully, cars were selling and everything else was happening.

For a lot of individuals who don't understand the process, I should explain some aspects of it. We get a lot of calls, and I do a lot of explaining of what takes place with this pension top-up fund up to \$1,000. What that effectively means is that whatever percentage of shortfall is found within the fund is the percentage that is made up, up to the \$1,000. My understanding of that is—I hear various rates—that the fund of the line workers at General Motors would only be approximately 40% funded now. That would mean that the top-up pension aspect would top up the 60% shortfall to the \$1,000, which would mean \$600 a month.

If we get a turnaround in the markets because there was a substantial—about 18%—drop in the fund markets that their funds were invested in, that would mean there would be less of an onus requirement for the province to step in.

The concern here is that if the province had never stepped in, the fund would be fully funded and there would be no issues or concerns. Governments of all stripes have had this kick at the cat, so to speak, and nobody has really fixed the problem, taken care of it or addressed the issues. My understanding is that Chrysler and Ford have no issue, but General Motors did not comply.

A couple of precedents were set in the province. One was Algoma Steel. Our party supported their pension fund; otherwise, it would have broken the very base fund that we're talking about and lost all the funds. The other one that took place, which the current government assisted with, was Stelco. What do you do in situations like this? I'm going to give some options a little bit later, but I want to talk about some of these things.

What are you going to do with a 92-year-old individual—my uncle, for example—who's very dependent on his General Motors pension? He never missed a day of work in his entire life, and until he was 91 years old, he never went to the hospital. Here's an individual who has

contributed his entire life and never missed a day of work, who has a very, very meagre pension. That individual, if you walk into their house, every wall is white gloss paint. There are no luxuries there. It's very basic. It has a garden the size of the official opposition party, and that's how they supplement their income, by taking care of those things.

What about my mother-in-law, 86 years old? What about my sisters-in-law and my aunts? There are a lot of individuals who are very concerned with what takes place with this and how it's going to be impacted.

And I have to tell you, the individuals most concerned about not having the taxpayer supplement their income are the workers. They believe that the best way to make sure this fund can continue to pay is by ensuring viability within the company so that the company should pay due diligence in ensuring that all the funds are kept up-to-date. That is directly from the individuals that I met.

I see he happened to step out—but just joining us now is Mr. Tim Eye, whom I happened to meet on Friday, and we discussed that very issue with him. I know he can't participate in the debate, but I'm hoping he didn't pass on my confidential information that I passed on Friday. It's either a yes or a no—okay, very good. Thank you very much, because I've been trying to deal with this issue in a different aspect.

Effectively, the leader of the official opposition has said, "We're going to put some ideas on the table," and I'm going to do the same thing right now. I've been trying to draft legislation for an extended period of time. It's been shot down, and I fully expect it'll be shot down the next time as well because it effectively deals with options that are available.

When you're looking at contributions, who is eligible to contribute in the province of Ontario? Self-employed individuals? Workers who do not otherwise have a pension plan? What about people who may work for an Ontario employer but don't work in Ontario? For example, when the Kuwait issue took place, there was a huge contingent of people from Ontario that went to Kuwait to put out all the fires on the oil rigs, and those incomes there—they're Ontario-based companies but they're working out of province. Are they eligible to contribute? What about the amount of the contribution: Is there a minimum? Is there a maximum? What about the tax implications, if any, for a contribution? Specifically, is there a deduction from the taxable income for the amount of the employee's contribution? What about portability? What happens when an individual—and we talk about today's society and the amount of time that they spend in one particular job. What happens if they move from job to job, and what happens to the employer's and the employees' contributions in particular situations like that? If an employee wants to contribute, is the person's employer also bound to contribute? These are all questions that need to be answered when you're looking at a potential opportunity.

Effectively, what this is leading to is an Ontario pension plan bill. What this is designed to do is bring in

all individuals in the province of Ontario, so that it would be managed and funded in the same fashion as the Canada pension plan—not necessarily to replace the Canada pension plan but to supplement it. So when my kids start their—not their paper routes, but the first time they get a paycheque where there are deductions on it, they can contribute into the fund, so that when they achieve a retirement age, they know what their level of support will be.

What is the mechanism for collection, enforcement and investment? Who manages those entire processes? What about integration, say, with the public service pension? If you're going to move forward, how do you include all those other pension funds in Ontario in order to bring it in so that it can be managed by the province of Ontario? Quite possibly, the British example might be one to lead; that is, for those individuals who have a set fund now, it would be fixed in the fashion it is, but those moving forward would also have to contribute to a general fund for an Ontario pension plan. These are some of the things that a lot of us have been considering and have been working on for a considerable amount of time.

When we talk about the impacts here, when we talk about General Motors, everybody thinks of Oshawa. Well, quite frankly, the number one employer in Lindsay—and I see the member from Lindsay—is General Motors; the number two employer in Peterborough—and I see that the member from Peterborough was just here—is General Motors; and the number one employer in Port Hope is General Motors. So a lot more than just Oshawa is impacted.

What we need to do is ensure that there's consistency throughout the problem, so that the issue is resolved. What are some of the options? I met with Mr. Eye on Friday, and he had a suggestion whereby under the bankruptcy act, for any corporation that goes bankrupt, the assets are seized by the government in order to pay off any back taxes. Now, his idea was to declare any unfunded pension liability as a tax. I don't know if that would be possible, but there is the opportunity of declaring that in the same fashion that bankruptcy takes place, the taxes are paid and then the unfunded pension liability is also taken into consideration. I know the discussions are very much about who buys the assets, where they come into play and how all that plays out, but where does it take place? You have to start somewhere, and I think this is one of the key issues.

There's a lot of concern that taxpayers' dollars are going to go into supporting General Motors or high-paid General Motors workers who don't deserve that. But quite frankly, if the government of the day had not given the exemptions that took place, we would not be in this situation, because either General Motors would have gone under at that time, saying, "We can't afford it," and the pensions would have been secured, or we wouldn't be in the situation we are in now. We need to make sure that these individuals are taken care of.

There are a lot of considerations. For example, when I'm talking to individuals throughout the riding—what

are we going to do with a senior who's in their 80s and in a retirement home? Their pension comes in and pays for the retirement home stay to take care of that individual. Who is going to pick up that cost when that pension is gone and lost? It'll be the taxpayer in another form, because the support is not there. These individuals need to be taken care of. There are a lot of other areas that need to be addressed as well, because it's not just a matter of the funds; it's the other support categories that take place.

For example, if and when the funding from the pensions is reduced or lost for these individuals, what's going to happen for Canada pension plan when they file their taxes? Instead of the other aspects, now they will receive greater support from their other form of support, being the Canada pension plan effectively, which means the taxpayers, in another fashion, will be taking care of that instead of General Motors.

1430

These are all the considerations that I explain to individuals when they call in. It's not just a cut-and-dried issue. It's going to happen. I know on my own street I can think of the lady across the road, beside her, skip one, the next two up, the lady right beside me, the next two on top of that are all General Motors pension individuals who are very dependent on that. Their houses were built in 1958, three-bedroom bungalows, not the lap of luxury, so to speak. These are very concerned individuals: Who is going to pick up the tax base and where is it going to come from? If General Motors folds in Oshawa, the tax base alone to the local community will then fall on the residents and the other businesses, which will effectively mean either cut services or increase the tax loads in those communities as well.

I think there are a lot of considerations that need to be addressed here, and I want to make sure that everything is put on the table so that everybody realizes the real effect. We need to think outside the box. When I speak to the individuals, whether it's the local labour council individuals or whether it's local union presidents, on this, they realize there's no quick fix for the immediate situation. What we need to do is think outside the box and in the long term.

What I've done here is give some of those options or opportunities to think about. I certainly hope the third party will consider some of the things that I've brought forward because we need to think as a whole on the entire best interests of the entire province.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Further debate?

Mr. Paul Miller: First of all, I would like to welcome some guest from the CAW to the Legislature today, and I hope I get these names correct: John Gatens, Sandra Carricato, Armindo Vieira, Dean Lindsay, Richard Kratz, Orville Thacker, Don Wright, George Appleton, Gerry LeBlanc, Asit Das, Tony DiBartolomeo, John Priestman, Sherry Hillman, Roland Kiehne, Dave Champagne, Chris Wilski, George Bagorski and, from CEP, Josephine Petcher. Welcome.

I would just like to speak out on this issue. This is not a new issue; I can remember four or five years ago lobby-

ing in Ottawa for the United Steelworkers to change the Bankruptcy and Insolvency Act. At that time, the red flags were up about pensions in this country. This is not a new phenomenon, but it surely has hit our province, with all the job losses, and our pensioners are in dire need of help. This is the time for action.

Over the months since I was first elected to this Legislature, I have raised my and my party's concerns about the fragile pension system in this province. Just a year ago, on May 28, I asked the Minister of Finance, "Will you act immediately to significantly increase the monthly pension benefit protected by the pension guarantee fund?" I pointed out that "Many Ontarians are worried about their pensions and whether they will be able to enjoy a financially secure retirement. They're worried because Ontario's pension protection legislation is badly out of date and full of holes. In fact, the coverage provided by the Ontario pension guarantee fund hasn't been updated since 1980 and now covers only a small part of the typical monthly pension benefit."

The government's response to this serious, important question was to include in legislation that the government has no responsibility for a healthy, properly funded pension benefit guarantee fund and also that they would like to start dialogue with Ottawa. Well, the time for talk is over; the time for action is now.

On October 9, 2008, I raised the concerns of workers who wanted "pension and wage protection that would make sure that workers get every penny they are owed from their employer when they close or leave the country, including not only severance, but holiday pay." An example would be the company I worked at and am a pensioner from, formerly Stelco, now US Steel. I have a real problem with some of the CEO buyouts and some of the things that have gone on. For example, Mr. Rodney Moss—was it Moss?—anyways, he walked away. He was from the States, he came up to Hamilton, he re-vamped the company, painted a bit of machinery, bought some people out, made it look saleable, got some pension money from the government to help out with the pension fund a little bit, and then he turned around and sold it to US Steel. We had estimated from our union that Stelco was worth in the neighbourhood of \$1.2 billion for assets. He turned around and sold it to US Steel for \$1.3 million, and Mr. Mott, Rodney Mott, personally walked away with \$68 million in his pocket after only 18 months of employment. But they're telling my pensioners and my workers to give up \$4 an hour, to give up benefits. My pensioners are going to have to bleed the pension fund—but you've got this stuff going on in North America; outrageous. This has to be addressed.

This past March 12 I talked about US Steel-Stelco and noted that to begin collecting pensions, workers must have 30 years of credited service acquired through their years in the plant. At Lake Erie Works, about 50 workers fall short by months. The number doubles when you add workers who have 30 years of service but are short on their pension credits because of layoffs or strike time. I asked for bridging to help those people who were a

couple of months away—it didn't happen; not even discussed; it fell on deaf ears—two months away from getting their pension. At Hamilton Steel, where three quarters of the workforce have more than 25 years of service, there are about 300 workers in this position. On that same day, March 12, I raised the issue of hundreds of workers slated to be laid off at Stelco who are just months short of qualifying for their pensions.

The heart of the problem is that there are hundreds of workers who are coming up a few months short and will be forced to rely on EI if the practical bridging solution is not found. The difference between a pension payment and employment insurance is significant. With a typical Stelco pension averaging approximately \$2,600 a month, employment insurance pays a maximum of \$1,800 a month, so the pensioner falls short again.

On April 22, I told this House that New Democrats are outraged that this government is shutting down the debate on its budget by allowing only one day for public hearings on a matter of such critical importance. The Premier ended the debate on a budget bill that contains far-reaching provisions about the security of retirement incomes of millions of Ontarians. The CAW workers I rallied with in Windsor are gravely concerned about their pensions, and they should be. There's a shortfall of billions of dollars.

At the Protect Our Pensions rally on April 23 on the front lawn right out here, I was standing with my brothers and sisters in the labour movement who are deeply concerned about the state of their pensions: steelworkers and other unions. Again, I stand in this Legislature to make sure that the calls for pension protection from workers all across Ontario are heard. Those at the rally worked hard all their adult lives believing that when they retired they would have a pension to live on. Let me tell you, those pensions are deferred wages. They are negotiated contracts, that these people in good faith believed that the company would meet their obligation to these pension plans so that at the end they'd have something. So they gave up money to have secure pensions. Where do they find themselves now? In dire trouble.

This government is forcing them to live in uncertainty. Pensions have been underfunded, and this government has done and continues to do nothing to protect these workers, but says, "We're going to start dialogue. We're going to start talking about it." Talk about johnny-come-lately.

On April 30, I raised the concerns of people who work hard all their lives and defer their earnings to a pension plan. The least they should expect is when it comes to the end of their working days, they can count on the retirement income that they put away after decades of dedicated work to their companies. Yet we had Abitibi-Bowater in the north going to court to suspend pension payments towards its unfunded liabilities for workers. This government is trying to deflect the blame to the federal government when in fact the majority of the responsibility falls on this government's shoulders.

We are still shocked that this government brought forward a resolution to deflect its responsibility for pensions

when so many thousands of Ontario pensioners are in jeopardy. How could this government introduce legislation absolving the province of any legal obligation whatsoever to ensure that pensioners get every last penny owed to them? Shame. Shame on you.

1440

The NDP and I are not only the voices speaking out on the pension guarantee fund. Last week, Marie Kelly, assistant director for the United Steelworkers and vice-president of the Ontario Federation of Labour, spoke before the committee hearings on the budget. Listen to what she had to say regarding her concerns over this government's pension policies:

"[W]e really believe that the pension benefits guarantee fund has to be there for our workers. It has to be there to protect the most vulnerable right now in this economic crisis. That's the reason it was built up; that's the reason that it needs to be in place now more than ever."

From another union often referred to by the Premier and his ministers, Ken Lewenza, president of the Canadian Auto Workers, also spoke before the committee. Here are some of his comments:

"Until now, the practice has been that the province has always stood behind the fund. The new provisions in Bill 162 explicitly say that the government has no obligation under any circumstances to make any loans or grants to the fund.

"At the precise time that workers and retirees most need support, the possibility arises that it may be taken away from them. Thousands of workers and retirees have received significant support from the PBGF in the past. The potential victims of future plan failures should not be abandoned; instead, they should be reassured that society at large will be able to protect them."

On a uniformly accessible, province-wide pension plan we need to think, people, about the 65% of Ontarians who have no pension plan at work, who must rely on their RRSPs—if they haven't already spent it because they've lost their jobs—and they have to rely on old age and Canada pension. I don't know about you, but \$1,100 a month doesn't cut it if you live in a home and you're on a fixed income. It just doesn't cut it. Sixty-five per cent of the people who don't have a pension plan deserve better treatment in our province.

I have been working for over a year on a new pension program for Ontario. It may be different from my colleague's in the Conservatives, but we believe that employers have an obligation to the people of the province that spend their lifetimes building wealth for them and working hard for them, and they should not have the rug pulled out from under them at the end of their lives. They've worked hard for the money that they deserve and they should get it. We in this Legislature are responsible for protecting our seniors, protecting the working people of this province, and we have an obligation to see that a new set-up for Ontario is there. You cannot rely on passing it to the feds. We need an Ontario pension plan.

There are pension plans like this in other sectors of the world. There's one in Saskatchewan, right next door to us—or two down. There's one in Finland. There are some in France. There's one in Germany. We have the ability to create a fund that won't chase businesses out of Ontario. It will be a few cents an hour. We have a humanity fund in the Steelworkers by which we raised millions and millions of dollars for a couple of cents an hour from our workers that went in there.

If an employer came to me and said, "Mr. Miller, I'm going to give you a dollar raise, but 25 cents an hour of that is going to go into your pension plan," am I going to complain? I can't even get a coffee for that. That 25 cents an hour, starting at age 25, and I retire at age 65, is going to give me anywhere from \$1,000 to \$1,500 a month on top of my old age and Canada pension. Maybe I can stay in my home; maybe I can have some dignity; maybe I can live a life that I deserve. That could start now. It's too late for me because I'm too old to start into an Ontario pension plan, but we need to help our seniors and the pensioners now to make sure their pensions are secure and start setting up a plan to work for our kids and grandkids. We've got to start thinking outside the box. We haven't done this for many years, and it's time.

I know that 100% of the people in this House want to help pensioners, they want to do the right thing, but you can't keep talking about it and deflecting it. You have to face it. We have all kinds of information to share. Unions have been working on this for a long time, especially my steelworker union. We have a lot of valuable material that can move this process along.

In closing, I'm going to leave a little time for my colleagues: no more talk, no more creating tours through Ontario. We know what the problems are; they know what the problems are. We have to stop deflecting; we have to face our responsibilities and do something for the people of this province.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Member from Huron—Bruce.

Mrs. Carol Mitchell: I'm very pleased to enter the debate on the opposition motion. One of the things that is, quite frankly, not being talked about today is what is happening with the economy other than all the hardships that the people of Ontario are feeling today, what we have done as a government: the \$32-billion investment in infrastructure and the financial commitments that have been made to so many of our sectors, be it forestry, be it the auto industry, be it agriculture—a very long list of the work that has been done in order to ensure that we stabilize our economy.

One of the things that I also want to speak about for just a couple of minutes is the whole issue of taxation reform that is being presented in the budget, moving towards the single tax. One of the things that we have to continue to do is to bring about reforms and to adapt to the times and the realities that we face today. I think about the hardships that we are facing. We've seen unprecedented financial impact. We haven't seen it like this in over 80 years. I know when you're out and about, as all of us in this House are, people are very concerned.

What does the future hold for them? What will their golden years be like? That's not people who are close, like myself, who had a birthday yesterday, so I'm a lot closer, but it's people who are very young.

Mr. Michael Prue: Twenty-six?

Mrs. Carol Mitchell: Twenty-six again, yeah. I thought I had to bump it up to 29 because my kids are almost there now.

When we think about that, for someone just starting out, they want some guidance and they want some assurances of what they can expect. Also, as legislators, what we're looking at is what we can do in order to ensure the people of Ontario have their golden years—that they are safe, they are secure, and they do have financial security.

Then it comes back to, how then should that be provided for? We know that stabilizing our economy, obviously, is one of the greatest tools that we can use, because, quite frankly, these discussions have been going on in this House for a couple of years, but out in the general public, unless you were affected directly, not so much.

When we think about the Premier sending a letter to our national government, 65% of the people of Ontario do not have a pension. Therefore, what they rely on is CPP and old-age security. So this affects 65% of the people, we could say; if they did not have the ability to put enough aside, this is the funding that they rely on. Obviously a national discussion needs to happen for the majority of the people.

Then when you break it down even further, into the pension benefit guarantee fund, we know that it needs to be stabilized. We know that it needs to look to the future. What should that fund be able to encompass, what can a worker expect of that, and how then would that be paid for?

When we go back to the 65% who aren't making an annual contribution or don't have the ability to do that other than from their own personal registered retirement funds, the RIFs or whatever, and we look at the pension benefit guarantee of the percentage of the people, how then should that be paid for? Then we get into the discussion about, should it be premium-based, should there be something that can fall back on the tax base, or should it be a combination thereof?

But what we all agree on is that we have to get to the stage where it is sustainable. Obviously, as in all things, when you plan, you plan for the worst-case scenario and hope that is the worst-case scenario that you ever get to, and then you continue to build that system that will sustain that report. When we look at the Harry Arthurs report that was commissioned in 2006, we know 142 recommendations have come from that report. There's been wide consultation. So now where do we begin and how do we begin?

The Premier has sent a letter, to begin, at the national level—65% of the people, if you break it down. How do we move towards the pension benefit guarantee?

1450

We have also looked at tools to stabilize our economy—obviously, that's one part of it. Then, the short-

term relief—what has been provided. There has been an extension of the solvency amortization period from five to 10 years. There has been deferral of catch-up payments to provide one year of cash flow relief.

We also looked at locked-in accounts, which have gone from zero to 25% in one budget to 25% to 50% in this budget, which has certainly brought us to the national level. I know this is something that we hear a great deal about from our constituents as well.

What we can agree on, given the financial circumstances we find ourselves in today, is that we have to not only transform our taxation system; we also have to give to our companies, our small businesses and our large businesses the ability to transform themselves. By moving to a single tax, we have given the lowest corporate tax rates in North America and we have helped out our small businesses, and all of that is a full package going forward. That's one part of it. The stimulus is another part, and financial stability is another.

I come from a rural area, and we like to get to the money fairly quickly. I wanted to have some figures about what this motion represents for people in their pockets. We've heard a great deal from the opposition that it's not the time to come forward with our tax reforms, but this is what this means, in sum, to pay for what you are recommending: A self-employed businesswoman making \$40,000 would now have to pay \$4,000 a year. A company with 10 people making \$40,000 each would be charged an extra \$20,000 in taxes. So if your paycheque is \$40,000 a year, it's an additional \$2,000 that you're going to have to pay out of your paycheque to cover this. I just wanted to give it some financial perspective as well.

I do want to say that I am grateful to be able to enter the debate—quite frankly, this is a discussion that will be ongoing. We really must ensure that we have the tools in place to provide a bright future for the people of Ontario while ensuring that Ontario remains strong.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Further debate?

Mr. John O'Toole: I appreciate the opportunity to speak on this, and want to make it very clear at the beginning that I believe there's a general sentiment of wishing to do the right thing on this NDP motion. There are three fundamental recommendations, as has been stated, one of which I believe is probably widely supported on all sides of the House, which is to provide "a universally accessible, province-wide pension plan." That would be an ideal state for us to be in.

We could say we have federal plans that tend to achieve some minimum amount of coverage. That should be the goal; in fact, it was one of the recommendations in the Arthurs report itself. Having worked for a number of years in a personnel function at General Motors, I'm reasonably familiar with the issues, but also conflicted, to the extent that I did work there.

Number two is the issue that's really before us here, the pension benefit guarantee fund, and it's generally very poorly understood. I don't mean that to be critical;

it's perhaps just a way of expressing things. In fact, very few companies even belong to that fund. To belong to the fund, you must be a single employer pension plan, SEPP. They're the only ones that actually belong to it. Multiple employers aren't covered.

If you look at the numbers, roughly 70% of people don't have a pension of any sort, really, and 25% to 30% actually have some form of pension. Most of the public sector pensions aren't covered by the pension benefit guarantee fund, and the employer of record there isn't like General Motors, Ford, Chrysler or Stelco. The employer of record is basically the taxpayer. So the taxpayer is paying.

If you look at those public sector pensions, they're in worse trouble than most of the pensions we're talking about. The teachers' pension fund, the largest one in Canada, is short about \$35 billion. They actually had a very important ruling just last year that, going forward, teachers hired in September no longer get an indexed pension. They have a huge liability issue.

OMERS, the Ontario municipal employees, has a huge problem. All the pensions that you can name here today have a liability, all of them—not some, all. That's why they've had a federal commission as well as the Arthurs report on pensions. It's a huge, huge issue. I say this with some suggestion that the government should look at this pension issue, which they have, and there are some recommendations.

Number two is the problem. Who would qualify under the pension benefits guarantee fund? First of all, it has to be a certain type of pension, a single employer: Stelco, General Motors—you could name a few of them; there are probably about 12 of them in the Ontario. The rest of the pensions don't belong to this fund; let's be clear about that. They're not covered by it. The general misconception in the public is that they are.

What are they covered for? Well, it's only up to \$1,000, so if the pension fund was funded at 75%, of the first \$1,000, 75% would come from the employer even though it wasn't fully funded. The other part would come from the pension benefits guarantee fund, which in this case, if it was 75% funded, would be around \$250. The rest of the pension would come from the employer, not from the fund. It's important to clarify some of these things; it's technical.

Why am I interested in this? I'm a retiree of General Motors, with over 30 years. I worked in personnel, and I've basically studied this; I took the securities course to be licensed as a securities investor. But I've also talked to some of the experts in the pension field on my own just to become educated, because, provincially, we could argue that we were part of a government that cancelled the pension as we would know it. I've spoken with Cameron Hunter—who is the head of Eckler and associates, a firm that represents many pensions—as well as others. I'll just leave it at that.

I would say that the issue here that I want to get on the record is that we should be doing the right thing, but we're not the government. The real issue here is Premier

McGuinty. To be straightforward, he's the government, and if you want to really be specific, I think that FSCO, the Financial Services Commission of Ontario, is on the hook. In fact, I'd go so far as to say whoever was involved in negotiating pensions, pension entitlements and these options knew full well that the workforce was changing. We're outsourcing everything, so the base of contributors is getting smaller. There are fewer people paying and more people collecting. It simply doesn't work. It's finished, I'm telling you. So the government has a serious problem here.

At all levels, pensions don't work. They only work when the company keeps growing—it's like a pyramid—and they don't outsource. Why are they outsourcing? Because most of the pensions want to earn money. They want to earn a 7% return on equity or capital. I don't think the government can solve it. But Premier McGuinty's the Premier; it's his problem, and he should fix it. This is an agreement made in good faith between employees and employers. The regulator here, FSCO, the Financial Services Commission of Ontario, is his boss, and they have a job to do. It appears to me that they're trying to shuffle around it.

Now, there's a suspect portion in the last budget, Bill 162, the budget bill. There is a provision in that bill to set aside an amount of money to fix this problem, I believe. It doesn't say specifically, but there's a whole section on pensions. Have a look at the budget. They know there's a problem. They got the Arthurs report, there's a federal report, and this thing has been going on—I was the PA to the Minister of Finance, and I would know it has been going on for a long time. I think there's been a lot of inappropriate intrusion by government, I would say, starting in 1992—we all know that—2005, 2007, more recently in 2008, and now 2009. They're in this up to their ears, and the people of Ontario are being held hostage.

I think there was a very good suggestion made by a person that's with us, Tim Eye. It's one of the suggestions that are on the table. I'm going to read it, with your indulgence. It's a very good point of how this could be resolved. I hope the parliamentary assistant, Mr. Arthurs, is here today, Mr. Leal, who's from Peterborough—I know he has met with some of the stakeholders—and other members here who represent working people. We all represent working people. They want a fair shake, so stand up for them.

1500

Under Tim's memo here, it says, "Under Canadian bankruptcy law"—CCAA—"governments are the first creditor in line to divide corporate assets for taxes owed prior to secured and unsecured creditors." In other words, taxes are the first creditor for any money that's left in an organization. You'd think at the same time that the government recognized this and put the best interests of Ontario ahead of the bank.

Here's what he says: "We believe the government of Ontario has the legal and moral obligation to do what is best for all Ontarians. In the same context, a new law or

regulation giving the government of Ontario the power to declare"—this is the key—"any unfunded liability on a windup basis of ... workplace-sponsored pension plan tax owed...." If it was taxes owed to the government of Ontario and payable to the same upon disposition of assets sharing the bankruptcy, then the government really wouldn't be ponying up the money; they'd be taking the first residual assets, which would be shared to the extent that they did cover the liability.

I really feel that the government should be stepping forward. They're the government. They've been here for eight or nine years. Anybody who knows anything knows that this is a problem, and it has been a problem even going back into the 1990s. In 1996 there was a problem. It went to the Supreme Court of Canada. It was called the Monsanto case, about disclosing surpluses and who owns the surpluses. I believe that our critic, Mr. Sterling, will echo our response to this in a formal way.

I want to put on the record that I wrote to Mr. Bob Christie, who was the CEO and superintendent of financial services, on December 1. I wrote to him advising him of some issues around the pension plan. At the end of that, he wrote to me—I'm looking at my file on this. Mr. Christie said to me, "Re. General Motors Canadian retirement program"—Mr. Christie reported to Dave Gordon, deputy superintendent of pensions, and then eventually to Julina Lam Lyn. I spoke to Julina Lam Lyn directly, and she manages most of this plan; she is the one manager of the plan. I can tell you, I've spoken to others. I have spoken to many of my constituents whom I work for, and my pension is dependent on my constituents keeping me here—because formally we don't have a pension, if you want to put it that way.

In fact, you see, we really do. This is the story that's untold. Our pension was wrapped up around 1996. For members who were part of that plan, they got a payout.

Mr. Peter Kormos: You've got a defined contribution plan.

Mr. John O'Toole: A defined contribution plan is what we have. That contribution plan is like the marketplace itself: It's down about 40%, roughly.

I want to leave time. I want to be on the record as supporting the workers who, in good faith, signed, and they're entitled to their entitlements, as has been said before by Prime Minister Chrétien. In good faith, these people will find themselves in court, in dispute with the McGuinty government, to do the right thing.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Further debate?

Mr. Michael Prue: I have only a few minutes so I want to deal with this in a very positive, profound and tough way. I believe, New Democrats generally believe and most workers believe that every worker deserves economic security and a dignified retirement. When you start from proposition, everything else should flow. If you think that every person deserves a dignified retirement and economic security, then it is incumbent upon us in this Legislature to try to do something about that.

If you look back into the history, it wasn't that many years ago that this debate was up in Canada, and the

government of Canada established the Canada pension plan. They did so so that no one had to fear growing old anymore; no one had to fear poverty in their old age. Sadly, 65% of the people of this province do not have a pension plan—not a direct benefit pension plan, in any event.

Leslie Frost, the grand old man of Ontario politics, way back in the 1950s was looking at an Ontario plan. He dreamed of having a plan where everyone would pay into a pension and would be eligible for that pension at the time of their retirement. Sadly, he gave up on that idea when the Canada pension plan came in because he felt that the Canada pension plan would cover most, if not all, of the citizens of Ontario. Therefore, in his opinion, the Ontario plan was redundant.

I think we ought not to fall into that same trap. Pensions should be for all of us; pensions need to be for all of us. The Canada pension plan, in and of itself, is not sufficient to make sure that a person stays out of poverty, enjoys one's retirement, has economic security and lives in dignity for the rest of their days.

There is an argument—and I see it almost every single day in the newspapers—that the pension plans are just too rich, that all of those pension plans that were paid into by the paperworkers in northern Ontario, all those pension plans that were paid into by steelworkers across southwestern Ontario and throughout the rest of Ontario, and especially all those pension plans that were paid into by the many CAW workers, are simply too rich. They're too rich.

I read right-wing editorial after right-wing editorial saying, "They're too rich. We can't afford them. We have to find a way out of them. Look at Toyota versus General Motors." What spurious arguments these are. Toyota is of recent vintage in Ontario. They've only come here in the last few years. I would hazard a guess that they don't have any retirees at all. I would be shocked if they have any retirees at all. They've only just opened up operations. They hired people in their 20s. It's not conceivable that there are any retirees at all, and if there are, they must be at an absolute limit. But people turn around and say, "That pension plan they paid into for so many years is just too rich."

Well, I want to talk about what's really too rich. I don't know how many people get Maclean's. Last week's Maclean's, May 11, talks to me about pension plans, and the ones that I wish all of us had: real pension plans. It highlights six individuals, on pages 30 and 31.

The first one is Michael Sabia, BCE. How did he earn his money? "When Sabia took over BCE in 2002, its stock was struggling in the mid-\$20 range. He was hired to fix things, but when his planned privatization fell apart, the stock plunged right back down to where it was when he took over." His pension plan: \$21 million.

Robert Prichard, Torstar, the one that I saw in the Toronto Star this week, taking the GO train: How did he earn his money? "During his tenure, Torstar's stock fell by two thirds, and the company recently announced that its dividend will be slashed in half. Just after a large

quarterly loss and writedown were announced, it was revealed that Prichard would be leaving with \$9.6 million."

Tom Parkinson, the next one, Hydro One: How did he earn his money? "Parkinson left after scathing criticism of his billing practices from Ontario's Auditor General, but he still managed to pocket \$4.8 million on his way out, including severance of \$3.3 million and \$1.5 million in salary and other payments."

Not to be outdone, of course, we have those people in the United States who have ripped off the entire system. They go on to talk about this one: Robert Nardelli, Home Depot. How did he earn his money? "Nardelli was lured to Home Depot with a promise that he'd get 90% of his pay no matter how poorly the company did. He resigned in 2007 after years of slowing profits, and still got one of the largest packages ever awarded"—\$210 million US.

Rick Wagoner from General Motors: How did he earn his money? On March 7, "when Wagoner was forced out of GM's CEO office after eight years on the job by the Obama administration, he left it teetering on life support. That didn't stop him from driving off into the sunset with a pension package worth roughly US\$23 million."

And then, of course, not to be outdone by all of those guys, you have Stanley O'Neal from Merrill Lynch. How did he earn his money? "Under O'Neal's leadership, Merrill delved deep into subprime mortgages. When the market crashed and Merrill reported a quarterly US\$2.2-billion loss, he left with about \$161.5 million in stock options and retirement benefits."

If you want to know about gold-plated pensions, look at what the CEOs give themselves and look at what the companies set out for them; don't look at the poor workers who spent 30, 35 or 40 years on the line, working their guts out. Look at these guys. I'm telling you, I don't want to hear anything from the other side. I don't want to hear anything at all about the pensions being gold-plated. Thirty-five or 40 years of work and they end up here, coming to you, looking to you, trying to get a pension plan looked after. They're looking for an interim pension guarantee fund, and they are being attacked.

1510

The other side says, "We need debate." Debate about what? I don't need a debate, because I can look across this country and see that British Columbia and Alberta already started the debate and are already trying to make determinations. I can look to Nova Scotia and see them ahead of us, making determinations, and all I hear from the other side is a little bit of talk. We don't want that kind of talk. What we want is a mandatory pension plan that every worker pays into and that every worker, at the end of their 35 or 40 years, can expect to get back in return. That's what they want here in the audience. That's what you should be producing. The time for talk is past; the time for action is now. Protect the pensions that are out there and build the new ones for the future.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Further debate?

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: Following up on the remarks from the previous speakers, I just want to bring

attention to the fact that in our last budget, we did put forward a number of proposals to modernize Ontario's pension system. One of them is to enhance the power of the superintendent of financial services to review certain pension arrangements in restructuring proceedings—and also introducing a package of additional pension reforms for the fall of this year, 2009. So we're not ignoring the issue; we're going to deal with the issue.

The question is not, are we going to deal with it? I think the question is how we're going to deal with it. And the question today in front of us is how we are going to deal with the pension benefits guarantee fund, which the leader of the third party brought up today, regarding the situation where people have not received the money that they thought they were entitled to.

I am totally supportive of people receiving a pension. Most people in Ontario, including my own parents, don't get a company pension; they rely solely on the Canada pension plan. The member from Beaches–East York is correct: It's not adequate enough to live on that, but somehow—I don't know how—they make it work. They don't buy certain things that other people would buy. They both worked, and worked long hours in hard jobs, like many other Ontarians did, and did not end up with a pension other than what Canada pension gives them. I guess now, at the age they're at, they get an old age pension as well.

But I think the crux of the problem is that back in 1980—it's not that hard to understand—the pension benefits guarantee fund was set up. I don't even know, and I'm not going to put the blame on any particular Premier or government, but whoever was in power in 1980 set up the pension benefits guarantee fund. It was designed to protect defined benefit pension plans and the members in those plans should those companies that they worked for wind up with insufficient assets through a bankruptcy or liquidation. It was funded by a small levy on employers, so it wasn't the employees who were paying, it wasn't the taxpayer who was paying; it was the employer who was paying into this fund. And that's the key: The employer was putting money into this pension benefits guarantee fund.

So all was fine and dandy. In general, it would pay out up to \$1,000 per month in pension benefits if something bad were to happen to a company. Lo and behold, the 1990s arrive and a recession arrives. An NDP government is in place here in Ontario. They decide at that time that they're going to change the rules regarding the pension benefits guarantee fund. Basically, six companies—GM Canada, Ford Canada, Chrysler Canada, IBM Canada, Sears Canada and Stelco—located here in Canada wanted flexibility to trim their pension plan contribution. In other words, they said, "Mr. Premier, we don't have the money right now, because of the recession, to pay into this fund. So we'll pay later when times get better." The problem was that when things did get better, they didn't fully pay; not all of them paid the full amount. Some of these companies had also improved the pension plans of their employees and did not accord-

ingly put in the same amount of money that would make up for that increase.

The day came that Stelco was no longer able to pay or function with its employees and pay out its pensions. Stelco's pension plan has a \$1.2-billion hole in it, and the pension benefits guarantee fund, this fund that I'm talking about, has roughly \$230 million in it. So we have \$230 million in this fund and Stelco owes \$1.2 billion in pensions. What do we do? That's the key question. To run to a rash decision today and to adopt this motion I think would be a little bit irresponsible, because there are other companies and other employees that work for other companies besides Stelco. The member from Durham worked for GM, and other members have spoken about other companies as well that are owed pension monies. Those companies, if they put money into this fund, deserve to get something out of the fund. But we're dealing with a fund that has roughly \$230 million in it. We need to decide how much more to put into it and how to distribute that money.

So I think two things need to be done: The first thing is to collect the proper data so that we can assess the true value and cost of the pensions; secondly, clarify through legislation the original intent of the fund, which is that it was to be financed through premiums and not by the taxpayer. Again, some people think that this is a taxpayer-funded pension plan. It's not. It was funded by these companies that joined in. Many of them were large companies and some of them were small, but they put money into it so that it was a sort of an insurance that their employees would receive a pension. It's run into problems. It's been mismanaged since its inception back in 1981, it hasn't worked properly since then, and we're left with a problem. We are working on it. It's in our budget. We are looking at a way to bring forward proper legislation, and that's the way it should be done.

It is frustrating. The member from Beaches–East York talks about how many people got so much money elsewhere in their pension plans. But we hope that by bringing forward the proper legislation at the right time and consulting—which we have done; we have the Harry Arthurs report. It was only commissioned in 2006. It's come back with a number of recommendations. We have to look at those carefully and then move forward from there and bring the proper legislation forward, which will serve all the people in Ontario who are entitled to a pension.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Further debate?

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: At the outset, I want to thank the New Democratic Party for bringing this motion to the Legislature, because I believe that we have to discuss this. We have to forge ahead with some solutions to some existing problems that we have. A lot of people in Ontario, perhaps those who read the papers from time to time, think that this particular problem is associated with a few of our largest car manufacturers in the province of Ontario. Well, I tell you, it reaches beyond that. In the constituency that I represent, which is the west part of the

city of Ottawa, many, many Nortel employees are suffering and wondering what's going to happen to them next with regard to their pension rights and are looking to the government to find a solution to the fact that many of them may not receive anywhere near what they're receiving today or what they were expecting to receive when they retire. So this is not only a problem for GM and Chrysler; it's a problem for a lot of people around Ontario.

1520

I looked at a list of pension plans from across Ontario—and there are numerous ones; something like 15,000 different pension plans. Because of the number of exemptions, and the number of exceptions with regard to the pension benefits guarantee fund, I can't tell exactly how many are struck by—and protected, or supposedly protected, by the pension guarantee fund. But I assume that there are many pension funds and many people in Ontario who may suffer if a solution is not found.

I also want to address this problem that we have with the sitting government when they say, "We're going to talk to the federal government about this." Premier McGuinty has said, "We're going to talk about this at the end of May at a Premier's conference and a federal conference and we're going to talk about the solution to the pension problem that we have." The pension benefits guarantee fund is not a problem of Saskatchewan, it's not a problem of Quebec, it's not a problem of any other place in Canada but the province of Ontario. We have to solve that problem here in this Legislature, or that government has to solve that problem, as they are seized with dealing with that problem at this time.

We've heard a little bit about the history of the pension benefits guarantee fund. It dates back to the 1980s. I think that all political parties are painted with some degree of negligence with regard to dealing with the deficiencies that have occurred over that 25, 29 years, since it was created in the early 1980s. I can remember not only the problem that occurred at GM when the Rae government went in and said to GM, "You don't have to have your fund up to a solvency rate which is reasonable"—and they let them off the hook and they had to pay in a little bit into this pension guarantee fund, but nowhere near any kind of money that would cover the kind of risk that they were let off with, with regard to dropping their solvency ratio with regard to their fund.

The CAW was not lily-white with regard to what they were doing. Accord to the Arthurs report, they acquiesced with regard to allowing that solvency rate to go down in order for immediate compensation issues. I can understand that in terms of the union leadership at that time. Nobody thought GM—Bob Rae didn't think GM was ever going to go down the tubes. I'm not saying any one was at fault for the eventual collapse that has occurred, but I think everybody is sullied with a bit of the fault here.

This government, five months after they took office, wrote a cheque on March 31, 2004, for \$330 million to the pension guarantee fund to take care of the problem

with Algoma Steel. It was a loan. They gave them a loan for 30 years, with no interest paid on that loan. They gave them that money—\$330 million—then. As I understand it, looking at the last balance sheet for the pension benefits guarantee fund, they only have about \$160 or \$170 million left at this point in time. That amount of money, I'm told, would only cover some 7,000 Nortel employees that might be looking for help on their pensions for one year. That's how far out of whack this is. That doesn't take into account the Stelco workers we were talking about before, and it doesn't take into account the GM workers or the Chrysler workers or anybody else. So we've got to find a solution to this particular problem that we have.

Governments of all stripes, companies, employees and employees' representatives have all been part of the problem. It's been very convenient for all of us to shove this back and say, "Let's just deal with some of the other more urgent problems we have," but all of a sudden, with a thud, it's hit and it's hit hard. It's hit many, many people who are retiring now or are being paid pensions, but those pensions may be reduced dramatically and they are looking for help. We must address that problem directly here in Ontario.

Mr. John O'Toole: Dalton McGuinty should be addressing it.

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: Well, the government of the day is ultimately seized with this.

Fortunately, we had the Arthurs commission come forward and talk about some of these issues in a very logical, reasonable and intelligent way. Arthurs's findings are quite good, but one of the findings he makes is contained in the motion here, which I support very strongly, and that is, we must not only deal with the people who have defined benefit pension plans now, but we must deal with all of those people in Ontario—the other 65%—that don't have any pension plan at this time. I would say to the government, why not use this crisis as an opportunity to act now, not only for the people who need the help of the pension benefits guarantee fund, but let's deal with the other people and offer them some hope in their retirement as well.

We have an excellent report from the Arthurs commission, and it tells us how some of that could be structured. But it will take, as he points out, a champion for pensions to be present in our province. He suggests a commission to set up that champion, and have that champion come forward to lead the charge to change things here in Ontario. He mentions offhand that perhaps you could deal with the CPP and have it changed and all the rest of it. Quite frankly, I don't think that there's a ghost of a chance that the federal government is going to dip its toes into the mire that we are in here in Ontario—a mire that governments created and neglected over the last 29 years, since 1980, when this legislation was first created.

We must act, and we must act in a confident and thoughtful manner. I don't think it's fair to the 65% of the people who do not have pensions to say, "Pony up for all of these people who have a defined benefit pension

plan. You should bail these people out while you sit with nothing to go home to." We have to address both problems at the same time. If this government was showing the kind of leadership that it should show on this very, very important question, important issue, for so many people in Ontario, they would pick it up and say, "I'm going to use this opportunity, this crisis that we have for our workers, to go forward with a comprehensive plan to not only take care of the people who have been left stranded, but I am going to take care of the people who do not have adequate retirement incomes going into the future in the province."

1530

I do want to say that the Canada pension plan had significant problems in the late 1990s and early 2000s. The former finance minister at that time, who later became Premier of this province, Ernie Eves, went to Ottawa and worked with Paul Martin at that time, who was the finance minister of the government of Canada. They fixed the Canada pension plan so that it was properly funded. So these very large, serious problems can be recognized and can be dealt with if there is a will and a determination by the leaders in our province and in our country to do it, and that's what we need here.

This is a crisis. This is a tremendous crisis. The people who come to my office who are from Nortel tell me about how securely they thought they had their retirement planned out, and now they find themselves in a terrible, terrible situation, a terrible dichotomy. They are worrying about their wives, they are worrying about their family and the ability to carry on, and all we seem to be getting from this government, from Premier McGuinty, is, "Well, let's have a conference about it with the federal government. Let's try to shift as much responsibility on to the federal government as we possibly can," as this government seems so prone to do. As soon as they face a real challenge, they say, "Let's go and call the feds in and see if we can dump the responsibility on their shoulders," instead of standing up and saying, "Look, we've all been part of this problem. We've got to roll up our sleeves and find the solution."

We've got an excellent report, the Arthurs commission. Harry Arthurs went to all of the pension experts from across this country and this province and talked to them about how we could address these problems, because he recognized the problem with the pension benefit guarantee fund. He recognized the problem with 65% of the people not having a pension and an adequate retirement income in our province. So the blueprint is here. All Premier McGuinty has to do is get together with his ministers and get this thing rolling, because we need to provide the people from the auto industry and the people from Nortel who are retiring, who are in desperate straits, with some confidence that somebody is working on their problem and is going to find a solution for them.

We in government, if we have failed our people in the province and if we have said to them, "We set up pension legislation. We regulate pensions," whether it is a pension benefit guarantee fund or it's FSCO or any other

kind of regulation that we're involved in, then there's an obligation on us to step up now and find a solution for these people and feel their pain and understand that we can help. And we can help if we have the determination to do it. We must determine very difficult issues, like who should pay. It's very costly to deal with this, but we have to deal with it regardless.

I want to thank Ms. Horwath for bringing forward this motion. One of the problems I have with the motion, however, deals with the solution that they provide in one of the particular parts of their motion. I don't think you can just say, "We are going to pay this or pay that," without really saying who's going to divvy up for that particular amount, who's going to supply the funding for it. So there is a little bit of a problem with that, but overall I want to indicate my support and the support of our caucus for most of what is said in this motion.

Madam Speaker, thank you very much for this opportunity. I do hope the government has listened. I do hope they pick it up. I do hope they become the champion to seek a solution to this. I think together in this Legislature both our caucus and the NDP opposition would work in a non-partisan way to seek the best possible solution for all the people of Ontario, because we really need to work on this and give them confidence that they not only have to contribute to society during their working years, but that we will respect them in their retirement and want them to have the comfortable retirement they so richly deserve.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Further debate?

Mr. Mike Colle: The thing that has not been mentioned here is that two years ago Premier McGuinty got Professor Harry Arthurs to undertake one of the most comprehensive pension reviews in the history of this province. This was before the meltdown. This was before all of this was in the headlines. This was before these opposition motions. And nobody said a word two years ago when Harry Arthurs undertook this study because the Premier and the Minister of Finance knew that there was a looming problem. This was undertaken by Professor Arthurs in great detail as he consulted to see what the blueprint could be, and now we have the Arthurs report. It was great two, three years ago. Everybody was riding the stock market. Everybody was listening to their financial gurus, all those talking heads on television, on cable TV, telling you where to invest your money, where to gamble your money, all the casino-type investments. They were all saying it was great. Nobody around here said anything two years ago when Harry Arthurs was given direction by the Premier. Everybody was riding the RRSP wave. There was no end in sight. The TSX was going to go up to 20,000. New York was taking off. Madoff was taking off. Nobody said anything because there seemed to be no end in sight for that bubble economy.

But luckily, we have the Arthurs report now. It is a very good blueprint. Let's not repeat the same mistake made by the Conservative government of the 1980s and the NDP government of the 1990s. I'm not blaming

them, because as the member from Mississippi Mills said, government in general was asleep. We must all do something together to deal with this, and let's not make the mistake of not seeking expert advice like they did in the 1980s when they put together the pension benefits guarantee fund that was underfunded, then again in the 1990s when the NDP said, "Oh, GM is too big to fail." The NDP bought the old story of what's good for General Motors is good for everybody. That was not something that could hold up to any test, yet they went ahead without listening to experts and made these decisions in a dark room. That's what the NDP wants to do again. Without listening to experts, without getting proper advice, we'll make the same mistakes the NDP made.

Interjection.

Mr. Mike Colle: The member from Hamilton East wants us to make the same mistake.

We need to listen to Harry Arthurs. We need to—

Interjection.

Mr. Mike Colle: Here he is; he doesn't want to listen. He's still yelling because he doesn't want to learn from history. This is not something where they can say again, "Oh, it's too big to fail. GM is too big to fail." That's the idea they have.

There are people with all kinds of insights that we have to listen to. One expert we have is Keith Ambachtsheer, the director of the Rotman International Centre for Pension Management. He has been warning people about the need to have comprehensive action to deal with these pension issues. He's right up the street, and he has said to us over and over again that pension funds are actually extremely viable entities—much more so than the RRSP approach and asking people to depend on the stock market for their future income—because pension funds don't rely on the gambling that takes place and the exorbitant fees charged to people who are forced to rely on the stock market for their future income. That's what Keith Ambachtsheer says, and we should be listening to him.

Also, there's a very good proposal out of BC. BC has much the same problem. Their pension funds have lost \$300 to \$400 billion, huge amounts of money, in the same way ours have lost money.

1540

That's why I think the Premier is saying that we have a role to play in Ontario, and we're going to do that based on the Harry Arthurs report. Secondly, what we're going to do is sit down with other provinces that have the same situation—the vast majority of Ontarians are not protected by a guaranteed pension. They have zero pension. Those individuals, who have worked very hard all their lives—30, 40 years of work—and have so little, also deserve attention. They're not to be forgotten. They weren't working for General Motors; they were working for very small wages their whole life. Just as the General Motors worker who is retired now needs protection, that little person who worked their whole life also needs protection, and we must pay attention to both.

As I said, we need to listen to the experts and not go blindly into the dark like the NDP did back in the 1990s

with their "too big to fail" approach, because this is a global thing. This is something that requires a comprehensive approach, and that's why the Premier has said, very astutely, that all provinces and the federal government should look at the state of the CPP, with a comprehensive view to helping people, and not do what we did in the past; that is, a quick-fix approach.

I'm afraid that the thing that's lacking in this motion is a comprehensive federal-provincial plan. Also, they don't cost out. They say, "Providing a universally accessible, province-wide pension plan." What's the cost of that: \$20 billion, \$30 billion? They don't put that in the motion.

"Fully backing the province's pension benefit guarantee fund"—How many billions will that cost? The NDP, again in the dark, want us to make the same mistakes they made before by not listening to experts. We can't afford to do that again. We can't repeat the stupid mistakes of the NDP.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Further debate?

M^{me} France Gélinas: I wanted to share with this House that in my constituency office I very often get seniors coming in for help. They come in for help because they've got their new MPAC assessment that will mean an increase in the taxes they have to pay. Their budgets are so tight that with the little bit of CPP and the little bit of old age security, they cannot maintain their homes.

Those stories are tragic, but the saddest ones of all are the single older women who have no CPP because they chose to stay home to raise their family. They depend on very little money coming in through their old age security and the top-up to make ends meet. For those people, as soon as their hydro bill goes up a little bit, as soon as any expenses come in, such as the new HST, they cannot fit it into a budget, which is so tight and doesn't allow it. It always means the same thing: They're going to have to cut back on their basic needs. You're talking about food, you're talking about clothing and you're talking about a little bit of transportation, most of the time to go to physicians' appointments—very limited.

As we go on and see more and more precarious employment, we will see more and more people who cannot live their retirement with dignity. This is why New Democrats support the principle and objective that all workers, including moms who work at home, should be able to look forward to an economically secure and dignified retirement. That means fixing the pension plans we now have and investing so that seniors can live with dignity.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Further debate?

Mr. Bob Delaney: It's a pleasure to speak on this particular motion. I'd like to focus on what I think is the salient part of this, which is that the NDP loves to spend other people's money. This is an interesting proposal, but it's wrong-headed. What it essentially does is give corporations a blank cheque drawn on the Ontario taxpayer.

Let's deal with the three aspects of this particular proposal. Providing a universally accessible pension plan:

This Ontario Legislature doesn't have the jurisdiction or the power or, I put it, the need to change or to reform the Canada pension plan, which already exists to do exactly what the NDP motion advocates, in providing a universally accessible pension plan. Does the NDP suggest that a Canadian, just taking their proposal, who may have been raised on the east coast or somewhere out in the western provinces and someone who retires in Ontario—do they suggest that they should not collect a pension, as they propose? If that's not their intent—I suspect it isn't, and I'm going to give them the benefit of the doubt; I suspect that's not their intent—then perhaps they should just go through the motions, as it were, and ask their federal cousins to deal with the first part of this motion, which is to provide a universally accessible pension plan.

The NDP motion would ask Ontarians to sign a blank cheque on the pension benefits guarantee fund. What is the pension benefits guarantee fund? The pension benefits guarantee fund, for those of you who are watching at home and saying, "Never heard of it," is a fund into which pension plans pay so that in the event one of them fails, the pension benefits guarantee fund would be able to make up the difference, very much as the travel fund, if you were stranded somewhere, would reimburse you for travel. It's a loose analogy, but that's generally what it's intended to do. What the NDP motion proposes is that this pension benefits guarantee fund be completely guaranteed by you, by all of the taxpayers who don't have a pension to guarantee the pensions of the taxpayers who do have a pension. That probably hasn't been sitting very well with people where I come from and I'm pretty sure it hasn't been sitting very well all across Ontario.

So how much money is this? This is a lot of money. Let's be very clear. This is not just a few million dollars or even a few billion dollars but is very likely in the order of tens of billions of dollars, and again, from Ontarians, of whom two thirds don't have a pension, to give to the perhaps one third of Ontarians who do have a pension. The thing that bothers me about this is that it would forever absolve any and every company that wants to take its retired workers' pensions and fly the coop. They can take the pension money and run. You can chase them. You can talk about what you can do in terms of either civil action or criminal action, but at the end of the day, if this motion is adopted, it's the Ontario taxpayer who's left holding the bag.

That's not the intent with the pension benefits guarantee fund. This fund hasn't been managed very well in more than a generation. As my colleague from the other side put it, this goes through governments of all political stripes. So the first thing to do is to collect some proper data to set assessments that reflect the true cost—and this hasn't been done—the true cost of the pension guarantee.

Secondly, what we need here is not a motion like this but perhaps legislation that clarifies that original intent of the fund, which is that it was supposed to be financed through premiums and not by a future draw on taxpayers—through premiums; that part is important.

I think it's incumbent on us to have a closer look, particularly if pensions are intended to benefit seniors, at

what exactly has been done for seniors in the last few years. The enhanced permanent sales tax credit, which benefits low- to middle-income people, is going to provide up to \$260 per person, \$260 per person that's not available now. It would be refundable, and it's paid quarterly, not just once a year when you claim it on your tax but quarterly, so that it's actually a stream of income beginning in July 2010.

Property tax relief, in which the government of which I have the privilege to be a part has been a leader across Canada: We're going to be providing a new, refundable Ontario property tax credit. Again, the major beneficiaries are not the super-rich with the big mansions who don't need it, but it's low- to middle-income Ontarians, the very types of people who bought their homes in the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s and lived in them, raised their families and built their communities, and are now retiring in those homes. What's the best place to keep people when they've retired? In their own homes as long as possible, and that's what this measure does.

For all the best intentions of my colleagues and friends in the NDP, what they have proposed here would, in the end, be completely counter to what they intend, and that is why I'll vote against this motion.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Further debate?

Seeing none, Ms. Horwath has moved opposition motion number 5. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

We will call in the members. It will be a 10-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1551 to 1601.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Will all those in favour please rise.

Ayes

Bisson, Gilles	Kormos, Peter	O'Toole, John
Gélinas, France	Marchese, Rosario	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Hampton, Howard	Miller, Paul	Prue, Michael
Horwath, Andrea	Murdoch, Bill	Tabuns, Peter

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Will all those opposed please rise.

Nays

Aggelonitis, Sophia	Gravelle, Michael	Moridi, Reza
Arnott, Ted	Hoy, Pat	Naqvi, Yasir
Arthurs, Wayne	Jeffrey, Linda	Oraziotti, David
Balkissoon, Bas	Johnson, Rick	Pendergast, Leeanna
Bentley, Christopher	Jones, Sylvia	Phillips, Gerry
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Kular, Kuldip	Ramsay, David
Brotten, Laurel C.	Kwinter, Monte	Rinaldi, Lou
Brown, Michael A.	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Ruprecht, Tony
Brownell, Jim	Leal, Jeff	Sandals, Liz
Chan, Michael	Levac, Dave	Smith, Monique
Colle, Mike	Mathews, Deborah	Sousa, Charles
Crozier, Bruce	Mauro, Bill	Takhar, Harinder S.
Delaney, Bob	McNeely, Phil	Van Bommel, Maria
Dhillon, Vic	Miller, Norm	Yakabuski, John
Dombrowsky, Leona	Milloy, John	Zimmer, David
Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Mitchell, Carol	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 12; the nays are 47.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): I declare the motion lost.

Motion negatived.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GREEN ENERGY AND GREEN ECONOMY ACT, 2009

LOI DE 2009 SUR L'ÉNERGIE VERTE ET L'ÉCONOMIE VERTE

Resuming the debate adjourned on May 5, 2009, on the motion for third reading of Bill 150, An Act to enact the Green Energy Act, 2009 and to build a green economy, to repeal the Energy Conservation Leadership Act, 2006 and the Energy Efficiency Act and to amend other statutes / Projet de loi 150, Loi édictant la Loi de 2009 sur l'énergie verte et visant à développer une économie verte, abrogeant la Loi de 2006 sur le leadership en matière de conservation de l'énergie et la Loi sur le rendement énergétique et modifiant d'autres lois.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Further debate?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Well, it's an interesting opportunity to speak about this bill. I want to give you some background on my thinking on this matter before I talk about the substance of the bill itself.

In 2002 I was in Johannesburg for the Earth Summit, an interesting process, an interesting meeting. In the course of that summit there was a speech made by Jean Chrétien, who was the Prime Minister of Canada at the time. Jean Chrétien made a very solemn, stirring commitment to the ratification of the Kyoto Protocol by Canada. I have to say that generally the environmental movement praised Jean Chrétien for taking that commitment on, for being willing to stand with the rest of the world to ratify Kyoto and bring Canada into that community of nations that were willing to address climate change.

I have to admit to you, Madam Speaker, that in that year I too praised Jean Chrétien, thanked him for taking that step, appreciated the forward movement that he was committing Canada to. And I have to say that I praised Jean Chrétien much too soon, because the reality was that even though that step was significant, even though Canada ratified the Kyoto Protocol, in fact no plan was put in place to actually meet the conditions of the treaty to which Canada had bound itself. No plan was put in place that would have made Canada meet those targets. The budget allocations were never adequate to actually make things happen. So neither a legislative framework nor a financial framework was put in place to make that commitment live. However, the green ink for the government at the time was fabulous. It was constant, it was

rhetoric that scaled the heights, because people felt that a huge step had been taken forward.

As you well know, Madam Speaker, and as many may know who are watching this today, Canada's emissions grew faster than greenhouse gas emissions grew under the administration of George Bush, even though George Bush's America didn't ratify the Kyoto Protocol.

I tell you that as a cautionary tale, for when commitments are made to substantial breakthroughs into environmental areas, into environmental commitments, one can look back at the history of such commitments—the commitments by Jean Chrétien, the commitments by Dalton McGuinty in 2003 to shut down coal plants in Ontario by 2007, the commitments by Dalton McGuinty's campaign staffers in 2003 that new nuclear power plants were not part of the policy mix to deal with the coal phase-out. When I look at those commitments and I look at the commentary made by environmentalists about those earlier commitments, it makes me cautious; it makes me very cautious.

I approach this bill with that history in mind, those realities in mind, with a concern that on the one hand we need many of the elements that this bill would support, and a concern that in the end they won't be delivered, or won't be delivered in a way that actually gives Ontario what it needs to have.

We face an urgent situation in Ontario today, and everyone who sat on the committee that toured this province and heard people speak about the Green Energy Act, people who represent towns like Windsor, Hamilton, Kingston, people who represent ridings in the GTA, knows that we need action taken on a variety of fronts to deal with the profound problems, economic and environmental, that Canada is facing.

There are four substantial problems that we have to come to grips with. The first I'll note is that of oncoming climate change. People in this House have heard talk about this at length and over time. I'll say very simply that in April, in the journal *Nature*, reported in the British press but not particularly reported here, a peer-reviewed study noted that at the rate greenhouse gas emissions were climbing, we would hit the point at which dangerous climate change is expected to start occurring not in 2050, but 20 years from now, two decades from now.

1610

That is a very short time in the history of a society. Everyone here knows how long it takes to build power lines, to build power plants, to put in place rapid transit and roads, to reshape urban fabric. Twenty years is an extraordinarily short time in the life of a society. Yet that is the time horizon within which we have to substantially and dramatically change the way we deal with energy if we are going to have a better-than-even chance of avoiding severe disruption of our society and our economy. I won't belabour that point, but that's the larger context within which any substantial action on the environment has to be understood.

The second urgent issue we have to address in Ontario—and you are well aware of it—is growing unem-

ployment. Hundreds of thousands of people have lost good-paying jobs in this province in the last five years. Those people need work, their families need income, our society needs their taxes and this world needs their productive capacity. We need them to be contributing, yet they have lost and more continue to lose. And we in this province are losing the industrial base, the manufacturing base, we need to employ them in future.

This is a change that is not like previous recessions we've seen, where people are laid off and then, as demand returns, people are taken back into their place of employment. Hundreds of thousands of people are permanently losing jobs that pay decent incomes. That has substantial ramifications for our society and for the lives of those individuals and their families. If we're going to deal with that, we have to deal with a few other problems.

The third issue is the loss of our competitive position in the world. We in Ontario have continued to set the stage for higher and higher electricity prices. Some may argue that you need high electricity prices to force through conservation and efficiency. I would argue that what you need is investment in conservation and efficiency to control high electricity prices.

If you look at the report that was done just a short while ago by Don Drummond of the Toronto Dominion Bank—a TD economics special report in September 2008—he talked about the pillars of prosperity in Ontario. He talked about the Auto Pact, the rate at which the Canadian dollar trades and a variety of elements, including a well-trained and capable workforce, that are critical to us to hold on to a manufacturing base in this province.

A number of those elements are outside our control—we don't control Canada's exchange rate—but one element he talked about was the availability of low-cost, affordable power. That has been a huge competitive advantage for Ontario historically, and a consciously competitive advantage. When Ontario Hydro was set up at the beginning of the 20th century, Sir Adam Beck and those politicians—members of the Legislature and members of city councils—understood the advantage of taking the power generated by Niagara and providing it at cost so that companies would want to invest in Ontario. It was a huge advantage to us. We have lost that.

In his report, *Time for a Vision of Ontario's Economy*, Mr. Drummond talks about the subsidization of power rates in Ontario. He talks about the fact that power rates are subsidized, and talks about the impact of nuclear. He says, "A significant share of this implicit subsidy relates to the province's experience with nuclear power. As such, there are some concerns that the government's decision to invest heavily in existing and new nuclear assets will run contrary to the objective of lowering the degree of subsidization in the system."

My translation of that commentary is that the more we invest in nukes, the less affordable our electricity system becomes and the greater the negative impact on our economy. If we in fact take a course of action that does

not move away from nuclear power and does not move heavily into efficiency and conservation—our cheapest options—move into renewables, which have the potential over the next few decades to become without a doubt substantially less expensive, then we are going to be facing some very, very rough waters.

In the United States, recent studies of new nuclear power peg the price of power from those stations at close to three times what people are paying for power generation now in Ontario, peg the price for power from new nuclear at higher than the price that is proposed to be paid for wind power in the provincial government's program. Yet, the commitment to nuclear is fundamental and runs through all of the government's planning; in fact, I would argue it shapes the act before us, shapes it so that it contains the amount of renewable power that's generated, contains the amount of efficiency and conservation that is actually produced in this province, and thus sets the table for huge problems for us in years to come. Commitment to nuclear power will price Ontario out of the market; it will undermine our future as a job-creating centre.

The last point I want to make about context is that we are surrounded by jurisdictions that have increasingly figured out what the future is going to look like, that are racing ahead of us, and we are playing catch-up. In the United States, the new administration understands—and it may understand it very imperfectly, but the new administration understands that the future is going to be in clean energy. The federal government is putting in place funds to develop renewable energy to address climate change, energy independence and building 21st century industry.

If you look at Michigan, our neighbour, they have been battered heavily in the last decade or two by the decay of the auto industry. Their leadership, their state governor, is focusing heavily on renewable energy and development of clean cars, of electric cars, as the future for industry in that state. In April, Governor Jennifer Granholm of Michigan made this announcement: "Michigan's aggressive effort to grow the advanced-battery industry and the jobs it will create has resulted in four companies announcing plans to invest more than \$1.7 billion to launch advanced-battery manufacturing facilities in Michigan. The projects that will create" almost 7,000 "new jobs in Michigan were awarded state refundable tax credits that will help the companies in their quest for some of the \$2 billion in federal grants for advanced-battery research and development."

So the reality is that in our neighbouring jurisdiction of Michigan, they have a picture of where the future is, and they are moving towards it, because they want their people to be employed and they want industry in Michigan to support the future of Michigan's economy.

A few weeks ago, in Denver, Colorado, the American Wind Energy Association held their annual conference. Five years ago, 5,000 people would go to that conference; a few weeks ago, it was 22,000. Five American governors were there on panels hustling for business.

Michigan had a huge room in which they were presenting themselves as a partner for any industry that wanted to set up green manufacturing in Michigan. Ontario had three people in a little booth. Who's more serious about getting that green business?

In Colorado, they have a unit in the governor's office whose only function is to look at the supply chain for renewable energy companies, identify areas where businesses in Colorado can provide components, and go to those companies and try and insert themselves into that supply chain, or they will look at defunct industrial properties in that state and say, "We have facilities that could manufacture what you need to get your product out the door. Come work with us." They are consistently and aggressively going after that business.

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In Toledo, Ohio, this month, the Toledo Free Press reported that the alternative energy industry has become a bright spot in Toledo's otherwise dismal economy. There are 6,000 people in the Toledo area employed at firms contributing to solar cell development and manufacturing, according to Regional Growth Partnership, a non-profit economic development group. That number pales in comparison to the overall manufacturing loss in that region, but at 6,000 people, it actually is the core of what can become a growing industry in that area.

In the United States, jurisdictions that have faced many of the same problems we are facing here are aggressively going out and getting the manufacturing jobs and putting them in place. They're understanding, as I said, at the federal level in the United States that the world is changing very substantially. On April 22, the New York Times reported that the head of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission—and for those who are watching this, I won't repeat that name often because I know that it's a sleep-inducing thought. The headline in the New York Times was, "Energy Regulatory Chief Says New Coal, Nuclear Plants May Be Unnecessary." This is not a minor researcher in a large federal department. This is the person who oversees the direction of energy investment, energy regulation, throughout the United States. He sees that the way that energy, electricity in particular, is generated and distributed in the United States is going to shift dramatically. That is a debate that is not over in the United States, but at least at the very highest levels they're understanding that there is that opportunity. It's there today, it's alive, it has to be taken, and it can have a huge positive impact on the economy.

In Manitoba, we have a government that has become a leader in geothermal, that provides funding for householders to put in heat exchangers so they can take cold out of the earth or heat out of the earth. That isn't electricity generation. That's taking advantage of heat and cooling storage in the ground, something we should be doing—an area where that jurisdiction is leading the way.

In Quebec, they have investment in wind turbines that are changing the face of the Gaspé Peninsula. When we talk about investment in wind turbines in Quebec, you

have to understand that they're very focused on the Gaspésie, on an area that has been chronically underdeveloped, that has been losing employment and losing population. When Quebec talks about 60% Quebec content for wind turbines, they're talking heavily about content from Gaspé. Companies are having to move into the Gaspé Peninsula to make wind turbines, to make blades, to make the whole range of equipment to actually put those wind turbines in place. So an area that for generations has seen nothing but depopulation is seeing young people come back into the Gaspé because jobs are there that pay decently.

Quebec is using their green energy sector as an economic development tool—frankly, like Minnesota, which has a similar strategy in the north end of their state—and seeing the positive results that you can see if you're willing to invest substantially and understand where the future is going.

We need to have the same approach here in Ontario. We need to have a far more thoroughgoing and far more committed approach. I don't know yet if this act will give us that. I think the decision to actually go forward is beyond the act itself. You have to know that Premier McGuinty has made statements about the Green Energy Act and about the need to invest in the 21st century. When this act was introduced, he talked about the need for clean power: "We need those jobs. We need clean electricity, and we need to assume our full responsibility in the face of climate change." I have to say that's a great statement. It's hard to disagree with that statement. The question for all of us here is, will this act, will his power planning, get us to that point? Will we actually get the results that the Premier himself has said are critical for this province to have?

On the face of it, what's before us is less than meets the eye.

When George Smitherman, the minister, rose in this House on March 2, he made this statement about the Green Energy Act:

"What we're anticipating in the first three years, starting in 2010, associated with the implementation of the Green Energy Act, is the opportunity for 50,000 additional jobs in the province of Ontario in all forms. We anticipate that the investments associated with the transmission and distribution system of \$3.2 billion will account for about half of those. In addition, we will see renewables coming to life in the province of Ontario and a very, very strong focus on the conservation side of the Green Energy Act, including \$300 million of investment in our largest industrial concerns so as to help them emerge using less electricity.

"Across the landscape of these investments, we feel quite confident that 50,000 jobs will be created."

Now, I went to the press conference that the minister gave the day he brought the act forward, and it was interesting to me to see that the Toronto Sun reported what I had heard. The Toronto Sun reported that one of the first projects coming out of the Green Energy Act is expected to be a new transmission line between Barrie

and Sudbury. That's what I recollect the minister saying; that was a major piece. Now, if you go to your computer, go to Google and enter "Power transmission line Barrie to Sudbury," you will find that a power line has been discussed for that stretch for a number of years. Ontario Power Generation owns a dam on the lower Matagami River. They want to upgrade that dam—nothing wrong with that; I think it's a great idea—and they need more power line capacity to carry the power south. So in fact the major job creator that was announced when this act came forward was a power line upgrade that had been on the books for a while. I don't think it's a bad thing to have that power line upgrade, I don't think it's a bad thing to increase the capacity of that dam, but I don't think it has anything to do with this Green Energy Act.

The question that we are going to have to ask is, will the new jobs happen? Will they happen because of this act? One of the concerns that we all have to have is that if, in fact, Ontario continues with its commitment to nuclear power, then the amount of employment that's generated by this act and by the investment in clean energy and renewable energy will be substantially reduced in scale, will not be anywhere near the capacity or the potential that Ontario has to offer.

About the time this act came out, the Ontario Power Authority put out a release setting out their picture of the supply mix for Ontario. For those who are watching, the supply mix is what's going to be generated by what sources. About 53% of the total electricity in Ontario, the Ontario Power Authority projects, will come from nukes when all this plan is in place—53%. Eight per cent will be generated by those gas-fired power plants that Mr. Sousa should be fighting in his riding in Mississauga South, that I fought in my riding, that people are fighting in northern York region; that's 8% of the power in Ontario. Twenty-three per cent is through existing hydro. So 53%, 8%, 23%, and what's left for new renewable power in Ontario is about 14%, when in fact you could be producing an awful lot more of Ontario's power from new renewables.

The minister, when he was asked at the press conference about this act—he was asked about the targets, about the caps, about the limits on renewable power—said that there wouldn't be any targets, and I remember clearly him saying that there would be no upper limit either, that you could just keep on building. I find that hard to believe, because the simple reality is that the process to build those nuclear power plants is on the way, and frankly, if you allowed Ontario to fully build out the capacity it has for renewable power, if you allowed Ontario to fully develop all the efficiency and conservation that is at hand, then those nuclear power plants that are going to be built at the cost of tens of billions of dollars would be simply redundant. There would be no market for their power. They would be irrelevant.

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Does anyone seriously think that we will pay for two electricity systems, that we will pay for full-scale development of nuclear power, with the power line develop-

ment that all that entails, and at the same time pay for all this renewable energy and efficiency and conservation? It is not going to happen.

In the course of debating this bill—and for those who are watching today who are not familiar with the process, a bill is introduced for first reading. In second reading we debate the bill. Then there are committee hearings where we go around and listen to what people have to say. Then there's a session where we go through the bill line by line, or clause by clause, as we say, talking about what changes we want to see, what changes are necessary to make the bill function properly, what changes have come to mind because in the course of listening to the people of Ontario, it has been decided that the bill has to be shifted one way or the other.

In his public statements, the minister commented time and again about the importance of efficiency and conservation. I just read his quote from Hansard. But in the committee hearings and in the bill itself, there is no firm commitment to efficiency and conservation as the top rung of a hierarchy, to steps that have to be taken to deal with electricity issues in this province.

No targets were set for efficiency and conservation in that act. If you actually want to have efficiency and conservation in there, if you want to have the programs to spend the money, if you want to direct the bureaucracy to deliver the goods, if you want to send out a signal to the larger world that this is the direction you're going to go in, it's best to put it in the act. It's not there.

The Ontario Power Authority has repeatedly declined to take advantage of all the cost-effective efficiency and conservation opportunities that have been identified. Why? Why would you not take advantage of the lowest-cost, most environmentally beneficial option that's out there? The answer in Ontario is that if you're fundamentally committed to the development of nuclear power, then you don't want to take all those efficiency and conservation options, because you're investing tens of billions of dollars in new nuclear power plants. You want the market there for the electricity. You want the demand there. You want people to pay you cash for the electricity you put in the power line.

If you want a green, renewable future that has efficiency and conservation at the centre, you take one course of action, you go down one road. If you want a nuclear-centred electricity system, one that is expensive, one that is unpredictable, one that has put a huge financial burden on the ratepayers and taxpayers of this province, then you go down the nuclear road. You have to choose one. I'd argue that the choice has been made that the information about exactly what is going to happen has already been set out in the media release from the Ontario Power Authority, and that the reality has been codified in this act, because this act does not go far enough to actually break the nuclear monopoly.

I have to say, in the course of hearing the presentations that we heard as we went around the province, one of the arguments that was made by those who are opposed even to the limited steps that are taken in this act

were that in Germany and Denmark there continued to be investment in coal-fired plants, that there were authorities in those countries who were saying that renewable energy was not living up to its promise. I have to say to you that people should be fully aware that what we are engaged in here in Ontario and in countries around the world where the matter of electricity is being settled is not simply an intellectual game where people sit down, go through the dry statistics, look at the numbers and say, "That's the best option." In fact, what we're dealing with is a battle in a wide variety of countries over market share. When it is said that renewable power can't replace nuclear, that is the argument not being made on technical grounds, because I don't think that that technical argument will stand up. It is not an argument that is being made on commercial grounds because the numbers don't work for nuclear. It is being made on the question of market share—who will make a profit and who will not make a profit. That is the basis of this conflict over the direction for electricity and energy in this province and around this world right now.

People should not forget that in April in this province we produced more power than we could consume, so that in fact companies were paid money to take electricity. We actually had to send out a rebate to companies that were customers so that the nuclear power plants that have to run continuously at a particular level weren't cut back; the term is "negative price for electricity." We paid money to customers, a number of whom were across the border, to take our power. That's the reality of electricity in this province. Do we really need to be in a situation where we're continuing to overproduce? Do we need to be in a situation where once again, just as we did in the last generation, we assume a mammoth financial burden to build nuclear power plants? I don't think we do. Given that approach, this act needs to be much stronger and far more directive than it is. You need to know that in the attempts to amend the act in committee, the changes that were needed to make the act effective in the way that it needs to be effective, to preclude the ramping down of renewables and efficiency so that the nuclear market is protected—those amendments were not accepted.

I want to talk about some of the mechanisms that were used to protect the nuclear market in Ontario. For most normal people, talking about the details of electricity purchase plans is eye-glazing, but there's one point I want to get across to folks who are following this issue, and that's that if you want to build new renewable power, if you want communities to build it, if you want co-operatives to build it, if you want First Nation communities to build it, if you want local utilities to build it, they have to know that when they put the money in, they will get a return. So if you put in, say, \$100 million, \$50 million—a lot of cash—into solar panels or biogas or wind turbines in your community, you're going to do the math and figure out what you're going to get back. One piece of the puzzle is probably going to be clear, and that's the amount that you will be paid. Those prices will be set by something called a feed-in tariff. But what is

missing in the act is an obligation for the power company to actually buy what you produce.

Let's say it's early June. The sun is out, the sky is clear; you're producing tons of solar power, and the Ontario Power Authority comes along and says, "Whoa, wait a minute. We're producing so much power, we have to pay customers to take it. We're not going to take power from you anymore. You're going to have to shut down. We're just going to cut off the mains; we aren't going to take any of the power that you make."

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If you're running a wind farm and you're running it in April and the nuclear power plants are going full tilt and Ontario is producing more power than it needs and the Ontario Power Authority comes to you and says, "The nuclear power plants, we've just got to run them and we've got to take their power, so we're afraid we're not going to buy your power. You're out of luck, too bad, so sad, good luck"—when you look at that issue, that's a central one for organizations to decide whether or not to invest in Ontario and invest in renewable power generation.

Tyler Hamilton, in the Toronto Star report on business, roughly a month ago talked about the impact of not having an obligation to buy that power that's produced by a renewable generator. He said—and it was a fairly straightforward column—having talked to a number of people who produced green power, that without that obligation in the act, their interest in investing in Ontario, making renewable power in Ontario, would decline very substantially because they wouldn't know over the next 20 years whether their power would be purchased or not and whether there would be a surplus of nuclear power that would in fact clear them off the table for years at a time. Who knows? The lack of that piece is a substantial concern for anyone who wants to see a lot of renewable power produced in Ontario.

The Green Energy Act Alliance, a group of environmental groups, a sustainable energy association that is profoundly supportive of this bill and did a lot of work to bring the government along and to sell the whole concept, had a panel of energy experts here in the Legislature a few weeks ago: speakers from Denmark; an unfortunate videotape from Hermann Scheer from Germany, who wasn't able to make it—he's a legislator in Berlin and he couldn't get to the event. Those people from California, Denmark and Hermann Scheer in his videotaped comments all talked about the necessity of an obligation to buy, take-or-pay piece in this agreement so in that in fact there was assurance.

In Germany, the legislation to put in place this feed-in tariff requires a purchase of the power. Just go on the Internet, go to Google, google it up, and you can read it; it's in English. They are extraordinarily successful—over a quarter of a million people working in the renewable energy sector. They have that obligation to buy the renewable power.

When I put forward the NDP amendment to have that obligation put into the legislation, to make sure that in

fact those who produce renewable power in the future will know that they can sell into Ontario's electricity system, I was told that the government couldn't support this because they needed to preserve flexibility. They wanted to look at other mechanisms.

I don't see an initiative to preserve flexibility when it comes to buying power from nuclear power plants. What I see when you talk about flexibility in renewable power is the ability to take or not take renewable power as the system sees fit, because the more fundamental decision has been made to commit to nuclear. That, I think, is a substantial problem for anyone who is going to come forward and want to produce power here.

If you look at the real experience that we've had in Ontario with renewable power in these last few years, you can see that we have underperformed—that less renewable generation has been put in place than Ontarians expected, than Ontarians wanted. There was a report that was put out in March with a very dry title, *Regulatory Risk in Private Investment and Renewable Energy Technologies: A study of the Ontario Wind Power Sector*, by three writers with a fair amount of background in wind energy. They argued that Ontario would benefit from formalizing its wind energy strategies through legislation. They suggested the Green Energy Act should enshrine in law long-term targets for renewable fuel capacity levels and restrict the ability of the minister to revise such targets outside the scope of legislation. They talked about the elevated risk in regulatory areas for those who want to put money into renewable energy in Ontario. They said that, in fact, you wanted to have some sense that there would be continuity, that a commitment today to renewable power would be there in the future. They note that since 2004, the identity of the Minister of Energy has changed four times. For a post that is central to this province's well-being, you have to ask about the level of commitment if we're changing a key minister on a yearly basis. That is a substantial concern.

If you look at how we've actually performed, at investment levels, they say that "investment levels have fallen substantially short of initial expectations. At the end of November 2008, approximately 800 megawatts of new renewable capacity was in operation...." That was 60% of the target set in 2003, and frankly, far less than should be in place.

If you look at the American experience, American states that have put in place targets for the amount of renewable power that they want to have operational have done better than Ontario. In fact, at the end of November 2008, the investment in Ontario was approximately one third of the investment that's occurred in states that have a set target for the amount of renewable power. That's not good news for us. We have not done as well as was targeted. We're not doing as well as American jurisdictions. We needed to have in this act a commitment not only to an obligation to buy power, but targets.

The German legislation has targets so the government can be held accountable if those targets aren't met. You know as well as I do that if there are no targets in place,

then it is very difficult for us to stand here in the Legislature and say that you didn't actually deliver the goods, because the government can say, "In fact, we got 20 of these things in place. That's a lot. You should be happy." We say, "No, you should have had 100 or 200 in place." They say, "No, 20 was all we ever expected. We didn't put it into the law; 20 was a good number. We're sticking with that number."

Failure to put targets in this legislation means that, as opposed to American jurisdictions where they have targets, we're underperforming. It's not in keeping with the legislation in the leading state in the world that is moving things forward, and that's Germany. That is a huge problem for us.

In the course of debating this legislation, one of the issues that came up was the whole question of enforcing building codes. I said earlier that you need to have targets for efficiency and conservation. We didn't get those. In the course of the hearings it was pointed out to us that building codes in this province, when it comes to energy efficiency, are largely unenforced, and that's of consequence.

We had testimony from Sustainable Buildings Canada, and they commented specifically about large buildings, not homes but larger commercial buildings. If you stand up in front of this Legislature and look south, you'll see those buildings, those large commercial towers that consume huge amounts of power. The Toronto-Dominion Centre consumes about the same as Collingwood: one building complex; one city. They are major power consumers, and so getting it right with them and their building codes is a tremendous consequence.

Bob Bach was the speaker for Sustainable Buildings Canada. He talked about the reality of building codes in this province. I just want to quote some of what he had to say: "In 1993, Ontario introduced an energy code into the building code. An energy code is a document that lays down the way by which energy efficiency will be established. It in fact sets a level of energy efficiency. Furthermore, in 1993, the province developed a compliance review and inspection manual for building officials and also trained building officials across the province in how to apply the energy code within the building code." He went on to say, "I led that work and I delivered the training, and I can tell you that many building officials had trouble understanding the issues required to establish energy efficiency in buildings."

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He noted that the province may set the code, but in fact it is building permit officials at the municipal level who actually enforce it. So if you want a building permit issued, you go to building permit officials at the municipal level. They review your drawing and give you a yes or a nay.

I asked him how broad was the non-compliance in this field and how effective was the Energy Efficiency Act? Did it really mean that buildings were built to a code that would reduce the amount of power they would use? He said he talked to people who were responsible for about

30% of the value of construction in Canada, a core group of people who oversee the act for the buildings that consume the most power in this country. They said the compliance level with building codes for energy efficiency was very, very low.

The reality is that we can design wonderful building codes; we can say in this act that we're going to have wonderful building codes in place. But if they're not enforced, then it doesn't matter how lovely they are, it doesn't matter how advanced they are, it doesn't matter how green they are; it means nothing.

I put forward an amendment to address this, because if you're not going to make energy efficiency and conservation the highest priority of the bill, then at the very least enforce the laws you have in place so that we get the benefit of the work that has been done to date. I have to say that that was not put in place; that amendment was not carried through. That was an error.

I want people to understand the scale of the energy issues we're talking about today. When we talk electricity, people think that's the whole energy picture. In Ontario, depending on the price of oil, we spend something like \$36 billion to \$46 billion a year on energy. That's for the whole shot: aircraft fuel, home heating, gasoline, diesel, hot water, everything—somewhere in that \$35-billion or \$40-billion-a-year range. We spend somewhere in the range \$8 billion a year on electricity.

If the Ontario Power Authority supply mix media release was accurate and this bill only actually results in 14% of our electricity coming from renewable power, we're talking about 14%, maybe about \$1 billion worth of electricity. A billion dollars is a lot of money, but compared to \$35 billion or \$40 billion, it's a small part of the spectrum. We need it to be much bigger in this act, because we import tens of billions of dollars' worth of energy fuel from across North America and around the world every year. That's money that flows out of Ontario and that is no longer in our economy, money that could be used to put people to work right here and is not used to put people to work right here.

When I tried to amend this act so that it didn't deal just with electricity, but at least with thermal, with renewable heating and cooling, which would have substantially expanded the scale of the act and the job creation potential, that was rejected by the government. What we need in this province is local job creation and broad thinking about where this economy is going to go in this century.

We need a sense of urgency about climate change. The economy is dominating our thinking right now, but just like the credit crisis broke on us last September and dramatically changed the way our economy functions, so too will climate change radically break on our society at some point and change the way our life is carried on.

We need a realization that we must go beyond the nuclear age. We are on the verge—and this act should never obscure that—of spending tens of billions of dollars on new nuclear power plants. Two of the leading contenders have substantial problems.

Areva, a French nuclear power company which is building a plant in Finland, is having huge problems. Questions have been raised about safety systems. There is now no confirmed date for the completion of that plant—and this is one of the most sophisticated nuclear reactor companies in the world.

Candu is proposing to build a nuclear reactor for Ontario that will be a prototype, that will not have been built before. I want to tell you that Atomic Energy of Canada Ltd. and Candu have not always done well on prototypes. People have heard of the Gentilly-2 reactor in Quebec. Well, you need to know that there was a Gentilly-1, built in 1972. Because it was a new kind of reactor, they were sorting things out. It proved to be so unstable that within five years it was shut down. So Quebec got one reactor for the price of two. It is risky to build prototypes. AECL wanted to build a reactor to replace the reactors that made medical isotopes, the MAPLE reactors. They proved to be so unstable that they were never allowed to come into full production. They have been shut down. And now they want to build a new design, the biggest they've ever put together, and we in this province will be the guinea pigs for that. That is a risk that is not worth taking. It's certainly not worth taking economically, and it isn't worth taking in terms of our industrial future, of where we're going to put our intellectual capital, our understanding.

The government needs to hear a warning about the direction that they're taking. I have set out my assessment of this act, of where Ontario stands and what we have to do. The government needs to be warned that their approach to the bill and to electricity in this province is hugely problematic.

People in Ontario are in a difficult way. Depending on their current situation, they may be nervous because they can see family or friends in financial difficulties. If they have lost their job and can't find any other, they aren't just nervous, they are desperate. And they are looking for action. There are people who are nervous and desperate about the state of air quality in this province and about the prospects for climate change. All of those people—the nervous, the desperate, the environmentally focused and the jobs-focused—look at what's being done in Europe, look at what's being done in the United States, and say, "We want to see that here in Ontario."

This act has stirred up hope. There is no doubt about it. You tour around this province, and it may be cautious in some cases and unbridled in others, but there is hope that this act will be used to substantially address problems that people want addressed. So this government has garnered a huge amount of praise for bringing forward this act.

There is a deep hope that the act will be used to force the development of renewable power on to the stage in Ontario. People with that hope are of the opinion that we may or may not get a small part of what we need in this province, but they have that hope that it will go forward. Well, they need more than hope. They need the material rolling out of those changes, of those investments.

1700

As written, this bill is set to underperform. The way it has been written allows the minister and any future minister to constrain investment in efficiency, conservation and renewables so that the market for nuclear power will be undisturbed. That is a mistake, because we need to prepare to go beyond the nuclear age. Even the Premier will talk about the fact that if he had a magic wand, if there was the opportunity that we didn't need nuclear, that would be wonderful. He doesn't believe the time is at hand. Well, frankly, if the time isn't at hand now, the time may never come. The time is at hand now.

I have to say that it is wrong and it is dangerous to play games with people. The minister has the power to correct many of the deficiencies in this legislation with regulation. He needs to use that power. He needs to use it quickly. He needs that power to get people to work. He needs to use that power to take on environmental concerns. He needs to use that power to set direction for industry in this province.

If the act is simply used to divert attention and provide cover for a massive nuclear investment rollout, then we will see a substantial risk developing for the people of this province, both in terms of their industrial future and of their electricity future. We need to go beyond tentative measures. We need to go beyond baby steps in protecting industry, in protecting the environment and in protecting jobs in this province. The minister and the Premier ignore that reality at their peril and they also ignore it at the peril of the province.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Ms. Laurel C. Broten: The Green Energy Act, as has been said, has two priorities: bringing more renewable energy online and creating a culture of conservation. I want to speak to those two points and a number of the issues raised by the member from Toronto–Danforth in that respect.

The certainty with respect to the ability to generate and sell that power arises as a result of the feed-in-tariff model, when combined with the right to access the grid and with certainty about regulation. The feed-in tariff is one of those mechanisms that have been used around the world, and Ontario seeks to use it in combination with a number of other initiatives that say that if you're willing to make the investment, we'll buy the power. If the project is economic, we'll connect it, and we'll do that in a faster fashion than has been done before. So it's not about targets and limits; it's about certainty and moving forward.

The regulatory consultations have already commenced. The OPA is consulting with the renewable energy stakeholders on the design of the feed-in tariff. The ministry has commenced consultation on domestic content, and the first session of that has been recently held. That arises even more solidly from a government amendment that will mandate domestic content provisions within the feed-in tariff to ensure that the technology and solutions behind renewable energy will be based in Ontario.

That leads me to the importance of the jobs being here in Ontario. I want to highlight another article. My friend opposite commented on a previous article by Tyler Hamilton. On May 9, this weekend, Tyler Hamilton wrote an article where he refers to "90,000 good-paying jobs over the next 10 years," and that comes from Robert Pollin, co-director of the Political Economy Research Institute at the University of Massachusetts. He says, "In Massachusetts, we're talking about it but we're not doing anything." We're doing things here in Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: The Green Energy Act does attract attention from a lot of people and the people of Ontario, but our caucus had a significant study done with regard to the claims that the government is making with regard to this act. We found that many of those claims are exaggerated, are very questionable and have no proof that they're going to work. I keep hearing these wonderful stories about Spain and Germany, how wonderful everything is in these two countries with regard to their efforts, with regard to their changing their energy mix and that kind of thing. As I understand it, in the most recent economic downturn, what country did the worst of all in Europe? Germany, because its energy costs are so high that businesses and manufacturers can't compete in that country anymore. So notwithstanding that we all are in favour of producing more electricity, more energy from renewable resources, it's kind of nice to have some jobs in the country as well.

As well, I'm told that all is not well in Spain with regard to their renewable energy projects. I'm told that it's a mess by people who have been there, who have seen it, with regard to what's going on in that area. So I ask, how much research and how much planning, by people who were objective and not trying to make a political statement but were really interested in improving our environment, were involved in this act?

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member from Trinity–Spadina.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I want to congratulate my colleague from Toronto–Danforth for his insightful one-hour remarks. I've got to say that this bill is not about building a vibrant and sustainable green economy, an energy system in our province. This is about nuclear. I'm really, really very keen on talking about this every chance I get. This government is not committed to a culture of conservation; this government is committed to a culture of nuclear and more nuclear. The member from Carleton–Mississippi Mills, a Conservative member who likes nuclear as much as the Liberals do—they're like this on that one—talks about the energy costs in some of these other countries being high. Well, it's nuclear that's been killing us for the last 20 years in terms of energy costs. We have this debt we cannot get rid of, have not been able to get rid of for a long, long time.

No one, not Tory nor Liberal, says how expensive nuclear is. They say, "Wind, solar, ooh—expensive. Look at Germany; look at the other places." But nuclear,

"Oh, no, it's not expensive, and by the way, it's clean"—please, please. You Tories and Liberals have it all wrong. Talk about how proud you Liberals are about your commitment to nuclear. Just stand up and say how proud you are and tell the environmentalists about your culture of conservation.

When the minister and the member from Etobicoke–Lakeshore say, "We have a balanced approach," why is it that the Ontario Clean Air Alliance recently showed that the McGuinty government is willing to spend 50 times more for a kilowatt of nuclear energy than it is willing to pay for a kilowatt of energy conservation? Please, Liberals, your commitment is to nuclear and nothing else. Stand up and be proud of it. Don't be ashamed; don't hide it. Just say it at every chance you get. But I don't hear too many Liberals talking about it. Stand up; be proud; say it.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member from Huron–Bruce.

Mrs. Carol Mitchell: I certainly will stand up and say that I'm very proud of the Green Energy Act. I'm very proud that nuclear is an important component of it. We understand that you need a solid foundation to work from. I have the largest nuclear generating station in North America located in my riding. I'm very proud of the work that they have done with the community. They are strong community partners, and I'm proud of the commitment that they have made to Ontario.

We generate 25% of the energy from my riding alone. We do it through nuclear, and we also do it through wind; 434 megawatts are generated from my riding of Huron–Bruce. We're very proud of the contribution that we make to energy to ensure that we have safe, clean, affordable hydro, because we understand how important that is for a strong economy.

We also see opportunities and further expansion of clean, green energy.

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One of the things I wanted to talk about was how important it is to ensure that public consultation remains a strong part of the whole process, which will be included in the consultation with communities—that will be a part of it. There's a working group formed right now—AMO, MOE, MNR, MAH and MEI are all working together on developing the processes—and health and safety will be taken into consideration, as well as the science base, as the standards are established. That is a very important component.

I want to be quick, because I want to give a practical application of this. One of the things we have a lot in my riding is dead stock removal. We have another group that is 185—unfortunately, I'm going to have to speak again—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Thank you. The member from Toronto–Danforth has up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Thanks to the members from Etobicoke–Lakeshore, Carleton–Mississippi Mills, Trinity–Spadina and Huron–Bruce for their commentary.

I want to talk first about the comments of the member from Etobicoke–Lakeshore. When you look at what is in place in other jurisdictions, when you talk about a feed-in tariff, there are three components. There's the right of access to the grid—no question—and price that is set high enough to induce investment. But there's a third piece, and that's take-or-pay, the obligation to buy. You need all three of those, and the people who were here speaking on behalf of the Green Energy Act Alliance were very clear about the need for all three pieces to be in place to actually have the results you want to have.

The member refers to the study that was cited by Tyler Hamilton in Saturday's *Star*. I actually went to take a look at the study. The writers talk about 90,000 jobs, not based on the Green Energy Act before us, but based on the scenario of Green Energy Act Alliance extended investment in conservation and efficiency. Effectively, you wouldn't get those jobs if you went ahead and refurbished the Pickering B nuclear power plant. That has to be dealt out if you want to get those 90,000 jobs. That's the choice. So when you say 90,000 jobs, be very clear that it's because you've got 90,000 green jobs, not a whole bunch of jobs that get eaten up by the nuclear establishment.

The member from Carleton–Mississippi Mills talked about electricity prices in Germany. Just to be very clear with him, electricity prices for the manufacturing sector are set at an industrial rate of about six euro cents a kilowatt hour, which is substantially less than their general electricity—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Thank you. The Minister of Northern Development and Mines.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: Madam Speaker, if I could beg your indulgence, I want to introduce a very close friend of mine who is visiting from Thunder Bay: my good friend Reg Corbett and his wife, Jackie Corbett. Welcome, Reg and Jackie.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Further debate?

Mr. Phil McNeely: The Green Energy Act is progressive yet practical. It builds upon all the work this government has already done to build a reliable electricity system to increase Ontario's supply of renewable energy. Ontario has been the leader on this front, and if passed, the Green Energy Act would help us continue to lead, establishing this province as the North American leader in green energy.

Last week, British economist and former World Bank chief economist Sir Nicholas Stern predicted that the Green Energy Act would be "extremely persuasive" to other jurisdictions and called the opportunities ahead an "economic no-brainer."

This proposed legislation would indeed benefit Ontario communities in many ways. It would help to increase the development and use of renewable energy in this province, complementing our strong base of emission-free nuclear power and large-scale hydroelectric power, which together represent three quarters of the electricity generated in the province at present.

The Green Energy Act would also help us better protect the environment, boosting our fight against climate change and creating a healthier future for our children. It would build a strong culture of conservation by helping homeowners, the provincial and municipal levels of government, hospitals, schools and industrial employers transition to lower energy use. We all know that the most important kilowatt of electricity is the one we don't use in the first place, so conservation is very prominent in this bill.

This focus on renewables and conservation would combine to vault Ontario to the front of the pack in creating new green economies, spurring innovation and creating more than 50,000 jobs in the first three years, as well as at least \$5 billion of investment in infrastructure and expenditures on renewable generation and conservation.

If passed, the Green Energy Act would mean direct and indirect jobs in smart grid and transmission and distribution upgrades and in renewable energy and conservation projects. The Green Energy Act would help to create jobs in a wide range of areas, including construction, domestic manufacturing and assembly, architecture, trucking, servicing and installation, and other sectors such as finance, IT and software. Many of the new construction jobs would be created by local distribution companies and Hydro One as they endeavour to upgrade their network infrastructure in order to allow additional renewable generation to be fully integrated with the grid. There would be a need for manufacturing jobs as firms respond to the demand for new equipment associated with investments in renewable energy projects and the grid.

To accomplish its goals, the Green Energy Act contains a number of key measures. On renewables, this bill would create an incentive pricing structure called a feed-in tariff for energy generated from renewable sources such as solar, wind, water and biomass. The proposed feed-in tariff program would help spark new investment in renewable energy generation and create a new generation of green jobs. It would also give communities and homeowners, including First Nations and Metis communities, the power and tools they need to participate in developing electricity for the new green economy.

Our government has begun discussions on domestic content provisions for wind energy and solar projects. Those provisions, in turn, would support jobs in Ontario in manufacturing, design, engineering and other related industries. A feed-in tariff model, combined with the right of access to the grid and with certainty about regulation, is not about targets or limits; it's about creating certainty. It says to investors, "If you're willing to make the investment, we will buy the power. If the project is economic, we will connect it. We will do so more quickly than has been done before." That's why we have a renewable energy facilitator who will be appointed.

Ontario has learned from other jurisdictions that feed-in tariffs provide a fair and transparent incentive to en-

courage development of all types and sizes. The proposed FIT program would encourage more renewable energy projects in Ontario, which in turn would mean more transmission and distribution development. This government understands that increased generation must be balanced with new transmission capacity, and we intend to work proactively with our energy agencies to initiate investment in new transmission projects. Those new green energy projects, and related transmission and distribution development, will in turn bring more jobs and economic development to communities. In fact, our job projection numbers see 17% of Green Energy Act job opportunities coming from renewable energy projects.

To boost Ontario's attraction to renewable energy developers even more, the proposed Green Energy Act would ensure a clearer, improved approval process that would eliminate red tape and duplication, and offer service guarantees while continuing to protect public health and safety. Our government's goal of building more green energy projects faster in a timely way will always be balanced with the equally important objective of preserving and protecting our land, air, water, ecosystems and wildlife.

I know that this proposed approval process has been an issue, so let me add that through the committee process we heard from presenters, including AMO, who asked that the Green Energy Act recognize the importance and unique role of communities. Community involvement and engagement are critical because there is no question that Ontarians are eager to be part of the green solution. One of the most exciting elements of the proposed act is its potential to encourage thousands of smaller green energy projects, conceived and developed by Ontarians in urban and rural areas across the province. Certainly, Ontarians want and deserve a say as we move forward. That's why we introduced an amendment that clarifies that the proposed act must be administered in a way that promotes community consultation. Our government has made it clear that public consultation must be part of the approval process that is currently being developed by the Ministry of the Environment and the Ministry of Natural Resources.

We would also task a working group of ministries, together with AMO, to develop a process to ensure that proponents consult with municipalities on site requirements and local infrastructure. As well, a fund dedicated to providing grants and assistance to local community groups would help communities and even citizen co-ops to generate their own power and power for the grid, leading to a greener power system for us all.

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Another key provision of the Green Energy Act would bring Ontario's entire energy system into the 21st century through a smart grid. A smart grid would allow us to meet the changing nature of power consumption in Ontario, positioning us to take advantage of conservation technology such as smart meters, as well as paving the way for innovation such as the plug-in hybrid car. It would also let us coordinate the production of power

from large numbers of small power producers. This would thereby enable many more small green energy projects to be built.

If passed, our legislation would eliminate local barriers in some jurisdictions that currently restrict renewable energy technology such as rooftop solar panels or ground-source heat pumps. We're also looking at ways to help community-based groups with some of the soft costs of project development so they could get up and running faster.

Finally, if passed, the act would clear the way for municipalities and local distribution companies to invest in renewable generating facilities below 10 megawatts in capacity. In this way, the Green Energy Act offers local governments and shareholders in local LDCs an opportunity to expand their role as energy leaders in communities and to contribute directly to building a new green economy.

In particular, local distribution companies are central to ensuring the proposed Green Energy Act would help communities become involved with renewable energy projects. Local distribution companies already have an established and trusted link to the electricity customer. We would depend on them to be leaders as we move forward on the priorities outlined in the proposed act, including, as I just mentioned, the ability to directly participate in small-scale energy generation. As well, we would expect LDCs to support other potential generators by working with us and other industry stakeholders to remove barriers, make system investments, and offer service guarantees.

If passed, the Green Energy Act would give the LDCs the ability to invest in grid expansion and upgrades to enable local renewable generation.

In the coming months, we will be working with energy agencies and the LDCs on the rollout of smart meters, which is laying the foundation for the smart grid. More than two million meters have been installed to date. The provincial rollout of time-of-use pricing is a key step in our drive to build a culture of conservation.

Indeed, at the heart of the proposed Green Energy Act is a recognition that LDCs must be in the driver's seat when it comes to delivering the conservation message to their customers. The Green Energy Act would give them more responsibility for provincial conservation efforts, including reaching targets.

Looking at conservation a little more broadly, the Green Energy Act recognizes that it's equally important as supporting more renewable sources of generation. Minister Smitherman has stressed that giving Ontarians the tools to understand and reduce their electricity use is good not only for the environment, but also for our wallets. We must work to build a culture of conservation now, because everyone knows that the price of electricity is under pressure to rise in the future.

If the Green Energy Act becomes law, about \$900 million will be spent on conservation strategies across all sectors over the next three years. By 2025, these investments, in addition to existing and other planned pro-

grams, should help a typical family in Ontario reduce their electricity consumption by 15% to 20%. The conservation initiatives that the Green Energy Act would engender would also be a key economic driver. We project that 15% of jobs created out of the act would be in conservation.

If passed, the Green Energy Act would allow amendments to the building code that would establish energy conservation as a purpose of the code. This is a major change. To help meet our conservation goals under these amendments, we would need electricians, builders, architects and renovators.

If passed, the act would also green Ontario government and broader public sector buildings and other facilities, establishing regular public reporting on energy use and establishing minimum standards for the new buildings that are equivalent to LEED silver. I've been at Humber College to see what the colleges have done in being able to measure energy use and reduce energy use. It's just tremendous how forward they are. Moving to a LEED standard will require skilled workers in the area of retrofitting, as well as workers with expertise in energy-efficient construction.

Further, the Green Energy Act would encourage energy conservation and demand-management plans from large electricity consumers and the broader public sector, including the municipal level, as well as universities, colleges, schools and hospitals.

On the homeowner front, I'm proud to say that last September I proposed a private member's bill concerning home energy audits which received all-party support. I wanted to ensure that consumers would be protected. The bill would have required a home energy audit report for all home sellers in the province. I'm sure you are all aware that the Green Energy Act contains a provision on home energy audits.

After listening to the views from across Ontario, we've added flexibility to this provision through an amendment that would address situations where the seller and buyer of a home agree that a home audit is not necessary. Under the amended provisions, the buyer could waive his right to receive a rating. Buyers and sellers are encouraged to go ahead with the energy audit; it is a small shared investment that would give a buyer a wealth of knowledge about their new home's energy use. To further help Ontarians make their homes more energy efficient, policies engendered by the Green Energy Act would establish Energy Star as the enhanced energy efficiency standard for household appliances.

The proposed Green Energy Act is indeed a bold and far-reaching plan. It would modernize and strengthen Ontario's energy system and bring more renewable energy projects, both large and small, to reality. It would ensure that our energy supply mix is one of the cleanest in North America and help our province continue to be a leader in the fight against climate change. It would help create a conservation culture, propel innovation, boost local economies and create good jobs all across the province in urban and rural communities, in the north and

in areas hard hit by the shrinking manufacturing sector. The next few years will see a wave of change in the job market, with, as I've said, at least 50,000 new jobs created as a result of the proposed Green Energy Act.

We're all poised to benefit from those opportunities. If passed, the Green Energy Act would give this province a blueprint for a greener future, one that would ensure a vibrant, prosperous and sustainable Ontario full of vibrant, prosperous and sustainable communities.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: It's a pleasure to rise today in third reading of Bill 150—as my party calls it, the tax and power grab. It was a member opposite who's quite a good friend of mine who did indicate prior to an amendment to this legislation that the government would be removing the mandatory home energy audit, which hundreds of thousands of Ontarians opposed so vehemently—before they would then find that they would be slapped with the harmonized sales tax.

Of course, one of our concerns in the official opposition is how this information could get out in the city of Ottawa with the consumer affairs minister, Harinder Takhar, that this home energy audit would be removed, prior to public hearings. That's a valid question for us to ask.

We in the official opposition had, as you will recall, asked for this legislation, this omnibus Bill 150, to go to committee hearings after first reading, something that the previous environment minister, Dwight Duncan, who's now our finance minister, did with another previous energy bill. This is a complex piece of legislation and, we're going to see, something that's going to have ramifications well into our future, impacted in a very truncated period of time, I believe within the last two and a half months.

I will not be supporting this legislation, because not only do I feel it could have received wider and broader consultation, but also because it will increase energy bills by as much as 30% to 50% for the average consumer. Who can afford that these days? How will that impact consumers and this 8% increase on home heating fuel that we're going to see in the days ahead as a result of the HST? So I appreciate the opportunity.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member for Trinity-Spadina.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I've got a couple of questions for my friend from Ottawa-Orléans because I know he's an engineer. As I understand engineers, they're mathematical in their thought, they're analytical and they're dispassionate, generally speaking. I want him to answer a couple of questions because I know that he will be fair in his response to my comments and that he will look forward to refuting some of the arguments, as an engineer would.

You Liberals have in the works the construction of two new nuclear stations in the immediate future, and then, after the 10 years, you probably have a lot more. As I understand it, based on the experience of Darlington,

these two new nuclear stations are likely to cost, with cost overruns, anywhere from \$30 billion to \$40 billion, we believe. That's a conservative estimate, with all due respect to the Conservatives. If that is true, how do you deal with these numbers? Don't you find it expensive? Don't you find it truly, genuinely expensive? That's one.

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Secondly, the nuclear waste: As an engineer, how do you deal with that? How have all of you engineers been dealing with nuclear waste in terms of the issue of safety? Because I happen to think it's not safe, and I don't know what they're doing with it. You might want to comment on that.

Thirdly, if you're building two new nuclear stations, in my view, with that extra capacity you are automatically building in a cap or a ceiling on renewables. That's how I see it, from a dispassionate point of view as well, of course, not being an engineer. But you look at those numbers and you say, "Hmm. If you've got two new nuclear stations, there's only so much of the renewables that you can put into the system." So if you could help me out and help the citizens to refute some of these arguments or to elucidate, for that matter.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member from Peterborough.

Mr. Jeff Leal: It was a delight to hear the speech from my colleague the member from Ottawa-Orléans, who makes a very compelling case for reasons to support Bill 150 in third reading.

I just recently had the opportunity to attend the Green Expo in Peterborough, and I want to talk about a small company that's owned by my friend Simon, who lives on Maria Street in Peterborough. He owns the Generation Solar business. He looks to Bill 150 as being a real catalyst for him to get additional and new business for what has become a very thriving small business in Peterborough, providing solar panels, solar technology to a large client base in the Peterborough area. He effectively looks to see that business building considerably over the next number of years. He'll also take advantage of the budget provisions to eliminate the PST for component costs in some of the technology that he will be purchasing in order to supply a rather large customer base.

In Peterborough, we also have a publicly owned utility, the Peterborough Utilities Services. The city of Peterborough retained their utility identity. The PUS has been very involved in a couple of projects. One is just north of Trent University, a run-of-the-river operation to produce electricity from the traditional run of the river. Secondly, we're looking at an opportunity on the Bensfort landfill site, where dollars have now been provided to capture methane gas, which is a by-product of decomposing garbage. The PUS will bring in the generator turbine set to start generating electricity from methane gas from a landfill site.

This bill, as clearly articulated by my colleague from Ottawa-Orléans, provides a real framework for the future that will generate and provide the next generation of jobs in Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member from Carleton–Mississippi Mills.

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: It's interesting, this Green Energy Act has a lot of numbers in it, a lot of complication to it etc. I just want to relate to the members here, because I sit in a committee and I'm responsible for my party on Bill 162, and—surprise, surprise—this week, the government lifted part of that bill. They've taken their section dealing with advertising out of that Bill 162. They put in more restrictions as to how the government could advertise and spin a particular subject

Under the new act—the act that they're now going to wipe out, even though we passed it in second reading in this Legislature, and we publicly stated that we supported this particular act—it says, “The following are the standards that an item”—an advertisement—“is required to meet:

“1. It must include a statement that the item is paid for by the government of Ontario.

“2. It must not be partisan as determined under subsection (2).” And here's the real kicker:

“3. Any numerical data in it must be supportable”—they're wiping that out.

What they want is the right to go to the Auditor General and say, “We're going to say that this new Green Energy Act will create 50,000 jobs, but we won't have any supporting evidence for those 50,000 jobs.” So here we have the government opposite and the members standing up and saying that all of these jobs are going to be created, and on the other hand, what the government is doing and saying is, “We can spin this now without having to support the numbers that we're spinning out.”

Listen, guys, if you want to talk about numbers, support them and don't give yourself the right—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Thank you. The member from Ottawa–Orléans has up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. Phil McNeely: I wish to thank the members for Nepean–Carleton, Trinity–Spadina, Peterborough and Carleton–Mississippi Mills for their comments. I'd like to go into the details of how nuclear has formed 40% of our base power for almost 40 years and will continue to do so, and then the other question he asked. I just want to concentrate more on the home energy audit because I had more impact in there.

I'd just like to tell you about the great rebate program. Canada and Ontario offer rebates on that. You can have the energy audit done for \$150, after you consider the \$150 contribution from the province of Ontario, and you get a nice report like I got from the EnviroCentre in Ottawa, a home energy report for my home which tells me, moving forward, what I should do. The people who own these homes, up to three storeys, that were built under section 9 of the building code—if we could take those 2.7 million homes and improve them as we should, it would cost about \$9,000 each, on average. You would get \$3,000 back from Canada and Ontario and you would have \$6,000 that would pay itself back in much under 10

years. So you would be putting an investment in your home and it would come back in a few years.

Your alternative, of course, is to pay energy, moving forward, with your home, that is not as energy efficient as it should be. There's about \$25 billion of expenditure that we can give to the oil companies or we can put in our own homes and make them cozier. Of course, if we put that in our own homes and make our homes cozier and more energy efficient, then we have these energy savings, moving forward. Not only that, but we will create something like 250,000 jobs over the 10 years, say, that it would take. We'd reduce greenhouse gasses by four million to five million tonnes per year. It would be a great thing to do.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Further debate?

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I rise today to speak once again on Bill 150. This is not the first time I've spoken in the House about Bill 150 and my opposition to the many, many holes that exist within it. I will focus on two concerns for this debate.

As I've said from the beginning, naming a piece of legislation the Green Energy Act does not necessarily make it so. This legislation removes all oversight for planning for municipalities. No longer will municipalities be able to enforce reasonable setbacks for turbines, but this Liberal government will. This Liberal government will decide for the municipalities what's best for them. Municipalities that have spent thousands of dollars on planning will see all that of money and public input go to waste. This Liberal government will now tell municipalities what to do and where wind turbines can go.

I know municipal governments in my riding of Dufferin–Caledon, and 35 across Ontario, are very much opposed to Bill 150. They have spent incredible amounts of time and money in developing plans and a strategy for wind turbines in their municipalities. Now the power-hungry Liberal government wants to take it all away. The township of Mulmur in my riding has passed an excellent resolution that I think is very important, and I think all members of the Legislature should hear what they have to say:

“Whereas the province of Ontario has released Bill 150, the proposed Green Energy and Green Economy Act, for comment under the Environmental Bill of Rights; and

“Whereas the township has expended substantial time, effort and money over the past two years to develop comprehensive policies to deal with alternative energy projects...; and

“Whereas the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing was poised to approve much of the township's new policy until an appeal of the amendment was launched by a wind farm developer; and

“Whereas the ... wind farm being proposed for the Honeywood area within the township may not be appropriate for the site and area in which it is being proposed to be located, given the number of serious and as yet

unresolved concerns identified during the environmental screening process; and

“Whereas, since transition regulations have not been released, it is not yet known whether this project will be subject to the proposed new provincial requirements or the current processes and requirements; and

“Whereas there is no indication that the province intends to consult specifically with the host municipality or its directly affected ratepayers in a manner similar to that now conducted by the municipality under the Planning Act, a process which is considered essential to sound land use planning; and

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“Whereas there is no indication that the substantial costs to municipalities in reviewing and commenting on such proposals can be recovered in the same way that they are now recoverable under the Planning Act ... and

“Whereas the Niagara Escarpment Commission has forwarded draft comments on the proposed legislation for our review and input, which do not appear to go far enough to protect the integrity and preserve the sensitive, unique, world-renowned qualities of the escarpment; and

“Whereas the township believes that the Niagara Escarpment area is not an appropriate location for large-scale energy conversion projects of any kind, and that, at a minimum, a 1.0 km buffer beyond the boundaries of the NE plan area is appropriate; and

“Whereas both the Niagara Escarpment Commission and the Ministry of Municipal Affairs, up to now, have been in full agreement with this exclusion and buffer area....”

The township of Mulmur urges the province “to allow municipalities ... to continue to deal with and make decisions on proposals that have been initiated prior to the implementation of Bill 150.”

The township of Mulmur is not alone. The township of Amaranth, the township of Melancthon and the town of Caledon have all passed similar resolutions calling upon this Liberal government to not remove their planning oversight.

The resolution that Amaranth passed reads as follows:

“Whereas the township of Amaranth is concerned that the removal of local land use planning controls for renewable energy facilities will have a detrimental effect on the municipality; and

“Whereas the passage of Bill 150 will limit the ability of the township to provide meaningful comment and participation in the placement of wind and other renewable energy facilities with the removal of power under the Planning Act; and

“Whereas without powers under the Planning Act, the township will no longer be able to require agreements related to access, landscaping and securities for renewable energy projects; and

“Whereas the township will no longer be able to address the needs of the local area in such an agreement.

“Therefore be it resolved that the township of Amaranth requests that the province undertake a comprehensive review of the potential health and land use

impacts to the general public associated with the placement of all renewable energy facilities; and review the proposal to remove local and land use planning controls under the Planning Act through Bill 150.

“And further, the township of Amaranth requests that the province put a moratorium on all wind projects and related applications pending outcome of the above noted review.”

Municipalities are concerned, and they have a right to be. They are seeing their time, effort and money thrown out the window with Bill 150. The township of Melancthon passed a motion, as well, that reads very much like that of Amaranth. All municipalities in my riding have the same concerns. They do not want planning to be placed in the hands of the provincial government.

The township of Melancthon believes that municipal involvement should include at least the following components:

- a requirement that the proponent consult with the subject municipality prior to submitting an application under the Environmental Protection Act;

- a notification of the receipt of complete application and of any subsequent changes to that application to the municipality and to landowners within 400 metres of the proposed facility;

- circulation of all related documentation to the municipality for review and comment;

- municipal and public notification of the ministry’s decisions and directives on the application and on all other relevant matters;

- municipal and public notification on any changes in the terms and conditions of approvals; and

- municipal and public notification of any appeals, related hearings of the Environmental Review Tribunal, any appeals of the minister, and the related decisions.

The town of Caledon has also passed a very similar resolution. They’ve requested that the town be involved in the development of regulations of the act, particularly as they relate to new renewable energy project approval processes to ensure appropriate municipal consultation. They’re asking for a seat at the table.

Not only are municipalities concerned, but so are Ontario residents. They are concerned about their health. I know I’ve received at least 100 e-mails from those concerned about the health impacts of wind turbines, mostly because these are the people suffering from various health issues.

One e-mail from a constituent says, “We are suffering from ear problems, earache, running eyes, ringing in the ears, balance problems, sleep problems, as well as not being able to sit outside our house due to the constant roar from the turbines. How would you like not being able to open your window because the noise will not allow you to sleep at night?”

The e-mail goes on to give these setback recommendations: Setbacks and noise guidelines for wind turbine complexes must be based on open and transparent process; setback and noise guidelines cannot be based on the self-serving opinions of the wind energy industry or

the Minister of the Environment. And setbacks and noise guidelines must be developed based on valid, medically based research from independent professionals qualified to conduct epidemiological studies.

Another one of my constituents has a very similar concern:

"Some victims are suffering from sleep deprivation, which leads to serious medical problems.... Ontario victims have written open letters to Premier McGuinty detailing their family suffering from adverse health effects from exposure to wind turbine complexes. These reports cannot be ignored.

"Under Bill 150, the Green Energy Act, the McGuinty Liberals want to legalize the potential for serious harm to human health provided the serious harm is not irreversible. This irresponsible disregard for public health is alarming and unacceptable to residents of Ontario."

Another Ontarian who is upset by Dalton McGuinty blatantly ignoring the comments of Ontario residents has said:

"Premier McGuinty has assured the residents of Ontario protection from adverse health effects by stating:

"The province will be able to use the most up-to-date scientific research and information from other jurisdictions to develop best-in-class standards for wind farm setbacks. The Ministry of the Environment will be responsible for developing the new standards, and consultation with the community will be part of the process."

"In spite of these assurances, Mr. Smitherman has demonstrated his contempt for this process by publicly stating regarding setbacks 'the distance currently envisioned is 500 metres.' Clearly Mr. Smitherman has a preconceived position and bias that setbacks are to be based on economics rather than health or safety of Ontario families.

"This interference clearly demonstrates Mr. Smitherman's disdain for the consultative process."

Dr. Robert McMurtry, dean of medicine at the University of Western Ontario, appeared before the Standing Committee on General Government regarding Bill 150, and he had this to say: "Dr. Amanda Harry reported on 39 cases.... For these people, whose health and quality of life were compromised, she concluded that people 'living near wind turbines are genuinely suffering.'

"Let me be clear, however, as to" my deepest concern. "Adverse health effects are occurring as we speak."

Most disturbing of all are the comments describing the sheer anguish and sense of betrayal that many feel. No one seems to care, and you certainly get that impression, listening to all the chatter that's going on in this House. No one appears to be listening to the residents' plight. They feel they are losing their homes and their lives.

The situation has been exacerbated for many who have experienced denial and abusive behaviour by wind turbine representatives and, on occasion, from Ministry of the Environment officials. All this victimizes them a second time. These findings and victim accounts are new in Ontario, but not elsewhere. They have been described too often in other countries.

A company in Germany with the mission statement to "enhance the international promotion of environmental technology within the fields of recycling of ash and waste energy sources, renewable energy, environmental industrial development" says this about the location of wind farms: "The location under consideration should first be wind-intensive during the whole year"—makes sense.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Excuse me. Could you stop the clock for a second? I would ask members to take their conversations outside if they want to have them. We have a speaker here.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Thank you, Speaker.

From a company in Germany, talking about the siting of wind farm locations: "The location under consideration should first be wind-intensive during the whole year. Buildings, particularly housing, should not be nearer than two kilometres to the wind farm." Remember, this is in Germany, from which the Liberals love to cite examples.

Riverside county in California has stated: "Restrict the placement of wind turbines within two miles of residential development unless the applicant supplies documentation that the machines will not produce low-frequency impulsive noise."

We cannot put a cost on the health risks associated with the harmful effects of wind turbines located within close proximity to homes, schools and hospitals. It is precisely why municipal governments are asking for a seat at the table when they want to be participating in the regulations.

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One of the many e-mails I have received states, "The removal of individual rights through the centralized and fast-tracking of the approval process is alarming and undemocratic." I couldn't agree more.

It is unusual that an important piece of legislation such as this, with no less than seven pages of explanatory notes and 65 pages of clauses opening up and amending over 15 pieces of legislation, including the Niagara Escarpment Planning and Development Act, which would greatly effect my constituency of Dufferin-Caledon, would be called for second reading debate within 24 hours of being introduced for first reading. Now, a short couple of months later, here we are at third reading with no answers, just more questions for Ontarians. What a shame. Once again the Liberals have had a chance to get it right and instead they're using their majority to trample over municipal and individual rights.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Ms. Laurel C. Broten: In the time that I have, I want to speak to a couple of issues raised by the member for Dufferin-Caledon, to tell her that we have been clear that existing laws such as the Niagara Escarpment act would continue to apply. Renewable energy projects support a long-term sustainable energy supply that benefits our natural environment, including minimizing the important effects and impacts of climate change. As she knows, our

government is committed to getting this province off the generation of electricity by dirty coal, and renewable energy projects can be consistent with the principles of the Niagara Escarpment plan. That is an endeavour which we intend to undertake, and to ensure that the protection of public health and safety and the natural environment are paramount.

During the extensive public hearings on the bill, we had an opportunity to hear from those who highlighted the importance of protecting public health and the natural environment. As a result, the government has taken a number of steps to ensure that the proposed legislation responded to what we heard. We brought forward an amendment to the proposed legislation regarding the grounds for a third party appeal before the Environmental Review Tribunal. People raised concerns with respect to the grounds specifically restricting the appeals on the basis of health concerns. As that was not our intention, we adjusted the proposed legislation accordingly.

The Ministry of the Environment is establishing regulations that will set out the requirements for setbacks and that will include wind turbines based on noise, including the minimum setback, and will examine perceptible, low-frequency noise, audible and vibration. Those are all issues that have been raised across Ontario. We believe that a science-based standard, monitored by the Ministry of Environment, is an appropriate way to protect the health of the environment, the citizens and the planet.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member from Nepean–Carleton.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I would like to congratulate my colleague from Dufferin–Caledon. As always, she has entered this chamber with a very thoughtful précis of not only the bill but her views on the legislation before us. She comes to the table with some very valid concerns on how Bill 150, the tax and power grab, will impact Ontario's municipalities.

Like the speaker before me, I also appeared at committee hearings, where we heard from several stakeholders from throughout the province, particularly in the city of Ottawa, from those in the housing market, people who are trying to sell homes, from folks who are pilots of small aircraft, from farmers who are concerned with this legislation on what it would do to prime, agricultural land. We heard concerns with health risks, criticisms from the public that, when brought up previously in this Legislature, the members opposite were very clearly unprepared to acknowledge. Those issues have not been addressed in Bill 150. Again, it is an omnibus piece of legislation, and I do not believe that adequate public consultation has been given.

My colleague from Dufferin–Caledon again speaks to the need for greater support for municipalities as a result of this legislation and what it might do. As we know from the legislation, all municipal encumbrances, condominium bylaws and any agreement on real property can be overwritten as a result of this legislation—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Thank you. Questions and comments?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I wanted to comment on the remarks of the member from Dufferin–Caledon. Although I may be taking it from a different perspective, I did have concerns as well in the act about the overriding of municipal processes for planning and zoning.

Mark Winfield—formerly of the Pembina Institute, professor in the environmental law faculty at York University—who spoke to our committee, addressed this very issue of municipal planning approvals and the need to maintain the involvement of municipalities in this, both to ensure buy-in and also because—he made the argument, and I thought he made it well—if you think you're going to set up a whole other process for permits, building inspections and assessment, you are in a situation where you may well create a much more difficult process for wind developers than you have now. He had suggested that the province send out a policy directive to municipalities that would shape the environment within which they made determinations on wind turbines or other renewable energy projects, but that the mechanism used in the act was one that would ultimately frustrate not only municipalities but renewable energy developers.

I thought his counsel on this was wise, I thought the counsel from the city of Toronto on this was wise and I thought that it was an error on the part of the government not to amend the act to reflect the policy advice that they gave, which in many ways is comparable to the comments on municipal planning made by the member from Dufferin–Caledon.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member from Huron–Bruce.

Mrs. Carol Mitchell: I wanted to respond to some of the comments made by the member from Dufferin–Caledon. Specifically, as I stated in my previous two minutes, 434 megawatts are what is produced, energy from wind, in my riding of Huron–Bruce. One of the barriers that wind development has experienced is municipal bylaws that are in place with regard specifically to setbacks. If we want to see the wind development go forward, and clearly we do, we have to establish provincial standards.

We also must be aware that they must be based on science, and that is part of the Green Energy Act. We also must ensure that it covers off our health and safety concerns, which it specifically does. And there has to be public consultation with the community. That's included in this as well.

So we understand in my riding, and this is one of the things that I'd like to talk about, that we can harvest the wind. We can reap the financial security from the wind while we also harvest the crops, and the two work hand in hand, glove in glove.

That brings me to agriculture. Unfortunately, I didn't have enough time to tell my story about the deadstock and how it's so important. It's a part of renewables. I have one deadstock collector who is now producing biodiesel. He charges \$50 to pick up the carcasses of cattle or whatever. He takes it all across the board. He's able to do that at \$50 because he understood a number of

years ago that you must look to the future, and the future was in producing green energy. On the other hand, I have another deadstock collector who unfortunately has gone out of business now. It was \$185 for him to pick up a carcass. So we have one—Atwood is what it's called, Atwood Pet Foods—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Thank you. The member for Dufferin—Caledon has up to two minutes to respond.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I have no idea what the member from Huron—Bruce was trying to tie in to Bill 150, so I won't comment on it. Etobicoke—Lakeshore, Nepean—Carleton, Toronto—Danforth: Thank you for participating in the debate.

So much of the detail that municipal governments and individual Ontarians want out of Bill 150, the answers that they are looking for, cannot occur because so much of the details are being left to regulation. There is no detail on setbacks. In fact, Minister Smitherman's speculation on what the setbacks may be is actually fuelling some of the concern that is out there across Ontario.

Municipalities are clearly concerned that the Liberals are steamrolling over them with Bill 150. Thirty-five municipalities across Ontario have passed resolutions, have participated in debate at their local council level, sharing their issues with Bill 150.

What we have here today is, again, the Liberals choosing to ignore what people are asking, what they want to raise, what they want to talk about. Instead, they will use their majority and steamroll ahead and forget about opposition because it's not important: "We don't care, municipalities, how you feel or whether you want your municipality to be unique. We'll just steamroll ahead and use our majority to plow through with Bill 150." I think it's a very unfortunate situation and does not bode well for what debate in this chamber is supposed to be all about.

Third reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): It being 6 o'clock, I declare this House adjourned until tomorrow morning at 9 o'clock.

The House adjourned at 1801.

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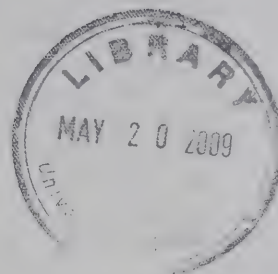
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Tuesday 12 May 2009

Mardi 12 mai 2009

Speaker
Honourable Steve Peters

Président
L'honorable Steve Peters

Clerk
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Deborah Deller

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 12 May 2009

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 12 mai 2009

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Good morning. Please remain standing for the Lord's Prayer, followed by the Baha'i prayer.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GREATER TORONTO AND HAMILTON AREA TRANSIT IMPLEMENTATION ACT, 2009

LOI DE 2009 SUR L'AMÉNAGEMENT DU RÉSEAU DE TRANSPORT EN COMMUN DE LA RÉGION DU GRAND TORONTO ET DE HAMILTON

Resuming the debate adjourned on May 7, 2009, on the motion for third reading of Bill 163, An Act to amend the Greater Toronto Transportation Authority Act, 2006 and to make consequential amendments to another Act / Projet de loi 163, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2006 sur la Régie des transports du grand Toronto et apportant des modifications corrélatives à une autre loi.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Further debate?

Mr. John O'Toole: It's a real pleasure this morning to get a few minutes to give our summary comments on Bill 163, An Act to amend the Greater Toronto Transportation Authority Act.

This is sort of the next phase of the commitment to public transit. I suspect, in all sincerity, that the opposition party and our leader, Mr. Runciman, have made it clear that we're in support of transit. This bill has a very laudable goal, and we have a few comments that need to be made. It's sort of like speaking about home and country: Transit is a pretty high-order priority for the government and for the people of Ontario, and being seen to do the right thing often serves a purpose.

There have been a lot of announcements over the last while, and it's hard for me to say where to start, actually. There have been so many announcements. Some of them actually make sense. Some of the announcements, for instance the Metrolinx update that I had back in July 2008, were quite encouraging. This was prior to the announcement of the Big Move report by the then board of Metrolinx under Rob MacIsaac. Now we have Mr. Prichard, the former editor or publisher or whatever of the Toronto Star, as well as the president of the University of

Toronto, heading up a new non-elected board. This is the first of four or five comments I want to make: The board that was established under the name of the Greater Toronto Transportation Authority, then renamed to Metrolinx—I'm not sure why they did that; I guess to spend a few million dollars branding. At that time, it was representatives from—we'll go back and report to that; it included the GTA plus Hamilton, so the region of Durham was on it, York region was on it, the city of Toronto had a great number of members, Peel was on it, and Halton, as well as Hamilton. Now, the way it was designed—and we said this initially, when this whole Greater Toronto Transportation Authority thing was announced a couple of years ago; we said that the two things that were designed conspicuously to be non-functional were the governance model—which was really run by the Ministry of Transportation. They had two key appointments: one was Rob MacIsaac, and the vice-chair as well. Those two key appointments basically brought the ammunition from the ministry, the McGuinty government, into the boardroom, and said, "This is what we're doing."

The second thing: There was no money committed to it. In fact, that was the dysfunctional part. There was no money, and the governance was screwed up. In fact, Toronto was boxed in. There were, I think, four Toronto members and five other members, and then you needed to have the chair and vice-chair, who were the minister's appointments, hand-picked people who were going to do his bidding.

In all positive comment, they did come up with a report called the Big Move. The Big Move is a big report, and it's a lot of money. It's actually \$50 billion over 10 years, which requires the province, and I guess the partners, whoever they are—I guess they're assuming the federal government's on board. This all ties into the Move Ontario plan which was announced some years ago; it's about a \$10-billion plan. All of these plans are really a signal to the second comment. Now they've got the number out there in this report, \$50 billion, which means the taxpayers and the riders of transit are going to pay through the nose in the future. Somebody is going to have to pay, and that's another concern we raise. I want to repeat our initial commitment here: that transit is the way of the future, when gridlock and the environment and all of those highly laudable objectives are a problem.

Now, after the Big Move report that was issued by Metrolinx, they came in with Bill 163, and what did they do? They blew up the board. They blew it up and threw them all overboard. It's tragic. I had comments and concern raised by some of the elected people who were try-

ing to do their best, whether it's Roger Anderson in Durham, or Bill Fisch in York, and others, who were talking, and all of a sudden taxpayers' money is being spent by a non-elected board. Who gets that? Bob Prichard is a friend, I think, of Dalton McGuinty. Well, I'm pretty sure he is, but possibly he's not, too. The point I'm making here is he's going to be doing Premier McGuinty's bidding on the spending, too. He's going to get this job done because I think he said that he would take this sort of temporary job for a couple of hundred thousand a year for two years, maybe, and have it done, or moving.

Now, I haven't really acquiesced that this is the right delivery model. All I know is that York region's Viva transit system is well respected, I think on all sides of the House here. It's my understanding that it isn't run by the same municipal employee group. I'm not against any particular group, but it's run in a competitive way by—should I say this? Is it OK to say this? It's a private sector provider: competitively; that's how it's run. Viva transit system is run by a private sector provider, and that's what I'd like to see: competitive bids. Putting safety and public safety first is very important, offering a public service at an affordable rate is very important, but I don't want to have a TTC monopoly. Can I be any more blunt? I don't want to see Howard—I won't use names; it's better just to say “the TTC board”—

Mr. Shafiq Qadri: Moscoe.

0910

Mr. John O'Toole: No, “The TTC board” is plenty. I don't want to name people. Howard isn't on the board; it's Adam Giambrone now. I don't want them running the transit system for Ontario. I look at Durham transit. Durham transit is a young and developing transit system. I think it's running a deficit; no question of that. About \$300 per household has been assessed on the levy. I see a lot of buses running past farms and up regional roads with nobody living on them, and there's nobody on the bus, generally. Generally there's just nobody on the bus; sorry. Now, is that good for the environment, having these \$250,000 diesel buses going up and down streets?

My understanding as well is that besides running a deficit, which—in fairness, almost all transits run deficits; almost all. I think GO Transit is probably paying around 80% of its operating costs from the fare box, which is pretty good. It's one of the better ones in North America, certainly.

The Durham transit system—it's my understanding that Whitby transit still operates with a private sector provider on a competitive bid.

Mr. Jeff Leal: Yes, Coach Canada.

Mr. John O'Toole: Yes. It's my understanding that it works in co-operation, co-operatively, and that's all I'm saying: The second most important thing is that we have to have partnerships in this. These partnerships are important, and keeping the highest standards of safety and driver training and all of those important requirements. As I said before, on our side we really did come down, in our discussions in caucus on many occasions, to—I want to make sure I cover all of these—five key concerns that

we are going to raise today or throughout the discussion here. The five things are the governance model—all the governance non-elected, non-accountable, Dalton McGuinty's the boss, and I believe the Minister of Transportation, Mr. Bradley, is probably disappointed, because this is right from the centre office, right from Premier McGuinty's office. He's going to spend \$50 billion on public transit, and he's got his minions to do that.

The other part I'm concerned about is that the meetings in Metrolinx—and most of them were quite complimented, in most of the readings that I followed up on, by the group Transport 2000, Natalie Litwin. I believe this volunteer group is working very hard to improve transit. They're concerned as well about certain aspects here, of throwing the Metrolinx board overboard, throwing them under the bus, kind of thing. So we're saying the second thing is these open meetings. Under Metrolinx they were open; under this new arrangement under Bill 163, these are closed-door communications between the Premier and his operatives in this new organization of Metrolinx.

The third and most important point here is the funding. Where's the beef? This funding is a really important issue. There's \$50 billion to do the Move Ontario plan. You know we could spend some time arguing that. We need more openness and more accountability. We need annual reporting of the status of these projects in Move Ontario, and the funding and the partnering in that funding: Who's paying the freight? Ultimately, you know that the funding is going to be by the taxpayers of Ontario. One way or another, they're paying. Now, in this tough economy, the argument in the public sector would be that this is a job creator. In the real world, everyone can't work for the government. You have to actually have labourers in the forest cutting trees down that are made into tables and things; you've got to add value—skills and knowledge to resources to create and add value. We're very concerned, on this side, about, where's the money? One example of a living comment in the media as we speak is about the new announcement for the 200 or 300—I should look this up, actually, and be accurate on this. This is on the new TTC. Now, the TTC is always a little out of control. I'm reading—these are current comments. But anyway, it says here, “No Provincial Cash for TTC Cars.” This was on May 3, and it says, “Mayor” Miller “made \$1.2B Bombardier announcement knowing talks stalled with Liberal government.” In fact, when asked a question in the House, the infrastructure minister, Mr. Smitherman, acted surprised. He said they knew nothing about this announcement. Now, we all know that Mr. Miller has no money, so where's he going to get the \$1.2 billion? They're starting to throw money around like it has gone out of style. It really is quite frightening: \$1.2 billion announced and nobody has come to the table.

I'll read one announcement from this article by Antonella Artuso. It says, “Discussions are also underway in the province regarding another priority of” Mr. “Miller's, the Sheppard LRT.” They've got a lot on the table here, and I'm going to just digress for a minute here. There's

another article. Maybe, for those people reading, it's quite a good article. Actually, this is from the Post in April, and it talked about the light rail system to Pearson. It's a \$4.6-billion kick-start, and the mayor said he's overjoyed. I think that was announced the morning after they were thrown under the bus, off the board. They say that Ontario grants a total of \$9 billion to public transit; \$9 billion? I hope it relieves the gridlock or there's some measurable benefit to society.

It gets very complicated. So they've got the \$9 billion on the table. No one has actually said where the \$9 billion is coming from yet. Now they've got the \$1.2 billion, and we're not sure where it's coming from, but it says in the article I referred to, "No Provincial Cash for TTC." "There's only so much money to go around," a provincial source said, adding Ontario is sending out feelers to the Stephen Harper government behind the scenes to determine if the streetcars might be funded through provincial-federal economic stimulus infrastructure programs." That's an awfully funny way to say, "We're not sure where the money is."

I am very concerned. We're raising a valid concern. Here's David Miller making announcements now about things he hasn't even got any authority over and he's going to embarrass—in all fairness to Premier McGuinty, he's got his hands full. They've lost about 400,000 jobs, the economy is collapsing and they've got this new HST tax coming in. It's in absolute chaos over there. They've got a deficit—I think it's \$12 billion and it's going to about \$30 billion. They're trying to find things to spend it on—\$9 billion here—and David Miller is announcing every day to spend more money that he hasn't got, and he's going to try to embarrass the Premier: "It's your problem." Somebody has got to rein him in. In all fairness to the Premier, the Premier is doing his very best to look after the needs of the people of Ontario and taxing them as much as he can. He knows he can't tax them any more. If he does, he's going to put another drag on the economy.

Our third primary concern is the fiscal plan here. There is no plan, and this is the most repeated theme that I see in almost every announcement: Bill 150 is another example of a failed plan. Where's the money coming from? We've had a study done on that bill, and it's true that even this morning in the media there's a report of the faults of—the Denmark story on wind is simply false. Most of their energy comes from other countries, from nuclear and natural gas. It doesn't come from wind at all. Six per cent of their total is wind. But I'm going back to this one, the cost here. Governments like to make announcements, but there's no plan.

Then yesterday we had the NDP's opposition day on sort of bailing out the auto sector, or the pension benefits guarantee fund. We know that it's in problems too by billions of dollars—billions of dollars—and this is for people that have retired and are doing their service to their community. I remain concerned that the fiscal plan simply isn't here on Bill 163. We should guard it carefully. At the very least we're asking for annual, regular

updates on projects and spending. I think they should be quarterly. We're going to be spending an enormous amount of money that we don't have, which means the only way it can be recovered is either you grow the economy, which doesn't look too optimistic right at the moment, or you raise taxes.

0920

We know that each person in Ontario who's watching today over the next number of years is going to be paying about \$1,000 a year more for electricity—that's a tax—because electricity's a product that you have no discretion about using. You're going to need it to heat your home, cook your food, clean your clothes. Also, now we've got the HST next year that's going to kick in. It's going to cost every person about \$600 or \$800 more per year. We know their health tax they had is costing \$600 to \$1,000 per person, per year. So there's about \$3,000 per person, and we've got a deficit, and they're spending money they don't have. It just doesn't make sense.

I want to repeat our commitment to public transit and to building better partnerships in infrastructure. Look at good examples. Somebody mentioned that one of the operators is Coach Canada. I'm looking to the member from Peterborough. Is it Coach Canada?

Mr. Jeff Leal: Coach Canada.

Mr. John O'Toole: Coach Canada?

Mr. Jeff Leal: Yes.

Mr. John O'Toole: Well, Coach Canada is an operator that is in the private sector generally, I guess. I would say that they should all be entitled to bid on these projects and operate them under the same set of rules. We just want a level playing field. If there's a bit of competition, we can be sure that the public and the private sector working together can make sure that we get good value for taxpayers' money for a good project. Let's not try to speed this thing through so that it's done and we've got more debt and no service. Those are the kinds of controls I want.

I'm going to bring up the fourth point, those controls that I said. The four key issues of our concern here are the governance model—we have suggestions on that. I see the Minister of Municipal Affairs is here, and that's extremely good. AMO's an organization that handles the transfer of gas tax. I think a good resolve to the issue on governance of the Metrolinx under Bill 163 is to put an appointee from AMO on the board, to build some sort of bridge. Don't cut off the municipal leadership, the elected, official people; work in partnership.

The second issue is the meetings. They should be open to the public. What have you got to hide? I know they don't know where the money's coming from. You shouldn't be hiding it. Talk to the people. If they want it, they'll finance it. They'll help you pay for it. They'll say, "Raise my taxes"—I don't think so, but ask them. Consult. Have open meetings.

The third one is the funding, which we've spent considerable time on. The funding simply isn't there. We've got David Miller making announcements he has no money for. He's got a blank cheque. He wants Stephen

Harper to sign it, or he wants Premier McGuinty to sign it. He's out of control.

The fourth one, of course, is the whole control mechanism. Accountability and transparency: We've all been asking for that. This is public money which we don't have.

Now I'm going to raise a fifth. This could be somewhat controversial. I was always under the impression that when they formed the Greater Toronto Transportation Authority, basically it was the GTA, and they added Hamilton—which was probably a good thing to do. I'm not sure Hamilton wants to be in the GTA, but Hamilton is an important destination. But you know what happened? The Sunday after Bill 163 was announced, I read—I got it sent to me by someone who knows I'm standing in as the transportation critic for Mr. Klees, who's running in the leadership. That's a whole other discussion; maybe I'll get some time to talk about that. But here's the key. I would say this: There was an announcement I think on a Sunday morning when everybody was at church—it could have been Saturday. With the people there was Mr. Bradley, and they were announcing that they were going to extend GO Transit to Niagara Falls and St. Catharines. It just so happens that's the minister's riding; Minister Bradley makes the announcement. It's not in the Big Move report. It's not in the Metrolinx report. It's not in all the diagrams that I saw pictures of and things from the Big Move report. All of a sudden, there's this new service being provided to St. Catharines and Niagara Falls. I was a bit surprised at that because it's really not in the mandate. Then I thought, well, I don't think it would be the minister pulling strings here to get things to—I hope not. That would be inappropriate really. The minister shouldn't be in the operational side. He's setting the bigger picture, the policy, like the Mining Act—it is a very important act. Good luck with it; it's got to be changed. But this one here was a bit of a surprise, so I'm raising this as item 5.

I've been arguing for a long time that we need the completion of GO Transit service rail to Clarington. Why am I mentioning that? We're the eastern end of what was then the Metrolinx, the GTA. They did promise at some future date—nothing in writing and no money—to get a train out to Bowmanville, and they promised bus rapid transit into Durham region. I think the bus rapid transit is important. It could probably be operated by Durham or GO. But we don't need two transit providers on the same road.

My real point there, in making sure my community is represented, is I want GO rail to Bowmanville sooner rather than later; in fact, it should be going to Bowmanville before it goes to St. Catharines and Niagara Falls. Why do I say this? Well, it's my understanding that Coach Canada already provides daily service to Niagara Falls and to St. Catharines. It's my understanding that Coach Canada gets no capital funding, no operating funding, and provides a service, free to the taxpayer, at a reasonably competitive rate. In other words, the consumer pays, the person getting on the bus or the train, and that's

the only revenue source they have. I kind of like that one. It helps me sleep more comfortably that somebody hasn't got their hand in my pocket.

So this is our fourth concern: Is it appropriate that the Minister of Transportation is going beyond the scope of the Metrolinx Big Move report, Bill 163, and adding GO Transit to St. Catharines and Niagara Falls when there is a service being provided today at no cost to the taxpayer? I question that, and I want that question answered. I think it's an important and perhaps even inappropriate action by the government. I can't believe it. I'm speechless—well, not speechless; that would be going way too far.

I really think that we've raised a few good points on Bill 163. I believe that the member from Brampton—Springdale is the parliamentary assistant. It's good that she's here, which is important.

A few other points of a more technical nature have come up: I agree that the governance to get the petty municipal politics out of it, to throw several overboard—under the bus, so to speak; not disrespectfully, though—but to advance this major project forward, is probably a good move to freshen up some of the leadership there. I'm sure the former president of the University of Toronto will be a great leader. I have no problem with that. I went to that school—he wasn't the president then; he probably wasn't even born when I went there—but I think that's a good move.

But here's the key, and let's pay attention to the facts: They need to move forward first and foremost with the smart card. They really do. This is important. It could be called the oyster card or Presto or whatever, but it would be something similar to a credit card. Let's just use that as an example, if you don't mind a prop, so that when you get on the bus, you would swipe the card—and it would be like a calling card, really—and it would be charged. Now, the smart card would also know that you got on at Bowmanville and got off in York region somewhere, but the software system in the background would determine which transit system got the money, because if it's a ridership pay system—probably 50% of the revenue should come from ridership—that would be a way of transferring the money in the background. I think that has to happen first, to streamline the integration of transit. That's a laudable goal. We want to coordinate and integrate the transit system as well—that we agree with. The smart card needs to be the first piece, and I don't say it as an operational person; I've heard that from people very concerned that this is important.

0930

I would say—I often hear this—that the link to the airport is very important as well. I know, as I said earlier, that the light rail to Pearson is \$4.6 billion. I'm sure this will be politically explosive when they start going through certain neighbourhoods and certain valleys, etc.—there will be all sorts of process there. But I know they have also streamlined the approval process for transit projects, and the environmental assessment process. As long as the right thing is done, I think making that a quicker event—this stuff has been talked about for quite a while,

certainly for eight or nine years that Premier McGuinty has been in office, and I would like to think that some of this goes forward.

Let's keep in mind, with all due respect, that David Miller—I go back to that; it overwhelms me—is out making an announcement that should be made by the Premier. He's spending his money and then he uses that to embarrass Mr. Smitherman, who will probably run against him for mayor. Maybe that is what's behind this—I don't know—but I really feel that could be part of it. He's making the announcement that maybe George is saying no to it. Now, Mr. Smitherman says no, and then he's on the campaign trail against Mr. Miller and uses it in the campaign: "Well, you refused this transit solution."

That's what is happening here. It's the lack of a plan that has been endorsed broadly. They had the Metrolinx group working together. They come out with a report, and there was no money—it was just a wish list—and now it's trying to be fleshed out at a time when there isn't five cents more in the taxpayer's pocket.

Here's a practical experience of my own. I take GO Transit as often as I can from where I live to Toronto. Now here's the real thing with transit. Generally, as long as it's convenient—you can't get off a bus on the 401 and expect to get to work unless you're getting a taxi. So you've got to bring it into town. Here's the point: For me to come to Queen's Park on a weekly basis—this might surprise you—it's \$100 after tax. When you get paid, say, \$50,000 a year, you end up with \$30,000 in your jeans after taxes. It's \$100. I have to make \$200 to get \$100 to spend. Do you get that? I'm talking more or less to the pages here, because very few other people are listening.

Now, here's the key: I was talking to constituents—it was a couple, and they actually work here at Queen's Park. They told me it was \$100 each. They said, "It costs us \$10,000 a year to come to work." That's \$20,000. You have to earn \$20 to spend \$10; we all get that. It's costing them \$20,000 to come to work. God, I hope they are making \$30,000. My point is, it's very expensive to use transit. Don't ever think it's the easy way and all the blah, blah, blah. That's baloney.

Not only that; it isn't that easy. When I get off the GO train at Union Station I have a choice. Often, on a lovely day like today, I walk up to Queen's Park. Most people won't, do you understand? It's sort of like the bike lanes in Toronto. There was no one on them in the winter. They were full of snow, actually. Some of these new ideas they come up with sound good but they're so impractical that it's really absurd. But what they are doing is a good job of diminishing the role of the car.

I live in the country. Some would say that's good; some would say that's bad. But getting back to the point, if you were to extend transit service to somewhere like St. Catharines, I don't think that many people come to St. Catharines on a daily basis. Maybe a lot of people go to St. Catharines from Toronto because the casino is there—maybe. I have no idea what they'd be doing. Maybe they're going to the Royal Ontario Museum or a Blue Jays game or something like that.

But you need to have reliable, predictable service. In Europe there's a success with transit because they have the density of population, and the way their older communities are organized. It's density, and I don't see much density in some locations; for instance, in Durham there isn't enough density to support transit. I see empty buses going up Simcoe Street from Oshawa to Port Perry to pick up one person. You'd be further ahead to give them a taxi chit. Do you understand? Just say, "Whenever you want to go to the university or the college or the hospital, here is a taxi chit." Give each family that requests them let's say 10 a year—10 free tickets to travel. They're paying \$300 now. Actually, the household tax for the transit piece in the Durham budget is I think \$300 per household.

I just think that some of the solutions we're coming up with are these mega-solutions that try to generally service the people. You can't get in and out of Toronto now because of the gridlock etc. They're going to have this big solution and everybody's going to move around. It almost reminds me of—there's not much concern for the individual or the human condition. In some countries in the world where there's a lot of density, they have what they call "pushers" in the transit system, where they actually put their foot on your back to make sure they can get the bus full. Now, that's sort of like how you treat cattle; it's not how you treat people.

I think that the transit solution is part of it. I think they've got a great vision here. I'm not sure I'm comfortable with giving four, five, six or seven non-elected people the authority to spend \$50 billion on pet projects. It's sort of like the subway to the airport, or to York University—a lot of money; I don't know. I think we're in a hurry to make a big mistake, to some extent.

I want to conclude by repeating the five key concerns. The first principle is this: We support the transit plan and solution. Conceptually, you have to have a plan. That's good. You need public participation in that plan. That's good. You need to finance it and you need options to finance it. Some of that includes the non-public delivery model, like it is done in York region. The York region Viva system is provided by Coach Canada. It's not provided by some other Adam Giambrone, Howard Moscoe, blah-blah solution.

Interjection.

Mr. John O'Toole: There's nothing wrong with them. They're already in gridlock. My sense is that we need to have delivery options.

To the extent that some of the solutions in communities that don't have the population, like my riding—parts of it are smaller. The community of Uxbridge has less than 30,000 people, Port Perry has about 30,000 and Clarington has about 80,000. I think the footprint for transit should suit the population and the uses. I think they need smaller vehicles. Why would you have a \$250,000 bus that's about 60 feet long, spewing out diesel smoke, going up some country road to pick up one person? It just makes no sense.

Not only that; many of the trips are for the purpose of work; that's busy in the morning—GO Transit is very

busy in the morning—and very busy at night. What do the employees do during the day? In fact, the CN drivers of those trains—that has been the problem with GO Transit—work split shifts. They're off in the afternoon. I don't know where they go. If you live in Brampton and you're at work at Union Station, do you go home for a couple of hours? I don't get that.

But my point is this: When you're arranging the delivery of a service that has two peak demands, you need to have options. First of all, a four-hour workday might be a decent solution for people working from 4 in the morning till 10, or 8, something like that, and that's your day. It's really not a full 40-hour-a-week job; we understand that. It might suit some people—do you understand?—and then a four-hour shift at night, instead of having somebody's whole day ruined to get eight hours in. I don't see that kind of flexibility in the plan, I really don't. I just see that this thing here is a lot of money, with not a lot of rules, to provide service under a lot of political pressure.

0940

There are parts of Ontario that don't have transit. I can tell you, I was listening the other day to the member from Timmins—James Bay, who has a role in this as well. I think he's the transit critic for the NDP; I think he has two or three communities with transit. He said—and the member from Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, last Thursday during private members' public business, was talking about the gas tax and gas fees—transit in rural Ontario, in much of northern Ontario, is the roadways. That's the transit system.

We can't ignore that that's the way Ontario is. We need to have a plan for the future, and some of the communities that are high density need to have more sophisticated transit options. I fully understand that, but sometimes, when you have buses and trains going down country roads past sheep farms, it makes absolutely no sense. Those buses don't run for free. If you want to run a bus or any service seven days a week, 24 hours a day, it takes seven people to fill one job. Seven people at \$50,000 a year as a reasonable salary, that's \$350,000. Then the bus is worth about half a million—holy smokes.

Anyway, I think we've made our point that we would like to support the concept of transit as outlined in Bill 163, or something similar to it. The plan is weak. It's a lot of big numbers and big pictures, but there are no time lines, no deliverables and no funding partnerships in place—none. In fact, in the \$1.2 billion announced by David Miller, there's no money for those streetcars announced. They're going to put pressure on other levels of government to pay for it.

Here's the key, though. I think we can have open, accountable meetings. I think that will fulfill a need. Have municipal representation of some sort, work out the funding and don't spend money you don't have. Financial partnerships are not a bad option, looking at Coach Canada as one of the service providers, or Greyhound or someone else. We'd cut out the monopoly business of the TTC and Hazel McCallion fighting about transit crossing

the borders. It's a waste of time; it's all baloney. Introduce controls in terms of accountability on an annual or perhaps on a quarterly basis for what projects are going ahead, where's the money coming from, where are we on the project—over budget or under budget—etc.

Transit has to have a vision and has to have a plan, and all I can say in this case is, they've got it partially right. We will likely be supporting this. Our leader and the members of our caucus have discussed this ad nauseam. Many of them recognize that—don't ignore rural Ontario. Their transit system is the car. Let's not go backward; let's move forward. We'll be supporting the bill. With that, thank you for the opportunity this morning.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Questions and comments? I don't think so.

Interjection: It's time-allocated.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Oh, sorry. I came into the chair a little late, and I was thinking it was the normal procedure.

Further debate?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Certainly it's a pleasure to rise and speak about this bill, and to bring the concerns of my constituents around both this bill and, of course, the fact that the government wants to invoke closure on it. Imagine what it's like to wake up one morning and hear piledriving outside your window that registers about three on the Richter scale.

Now imagine this: You're trying to run a business there, a production company, as one of my constituents was trying to run. It put her out of business very, very quickly: eight hours a day of piledriving, a two-stroke diesel engine.

Or imagine if you're a senior and you are having your afternoon nap, and this goes on non-stop. Imagine if you work shifts, which a number of my constituents do who live close to the railway, and are trying to get some sleep during the day with this going on outside your window. And then imagine that you contact the agency that your tax dollars pay for—in this case, GO—and ask them what is going on, and they say, “Well, didn't you know? We passed around flyers all over your neighbourhood not that long ago and we said there was some construction that was going to be happening in your neighbourhood.” Well, I'm sorry, but there's a very big difference between “some construction going on in your neighbourhood” and a two-stroke diesel piledriver outside your window. This is going to go on for months. GO cannot even say when it's going to end. This is what this bill speaks to. This bill speaks to a bureaucracy that will not be transparent, will not be accountable, even less transparent and even less accountable than has been our experience at GO and Metrolinx already.

Then, of course, as a community, what do you do? You organize, you gather people in the community, you contact your political representatives, you ask for a meeting with those responsible at GO. But what happens when GO refuses—public servants who refuse to meet

with the public, refuse to have an open town hall, and will only meet with a few hand-picked representatives from that community and their political leaders, and even then stonewall as to why they didn't test out vibratory piledriving, why they didn't look at alternatives to the schedule, why they didn't alert the constituents as to what really was going on, and would they or would they not recompense those who had lost way more than perhaps the solidity of the foundations of their houses—most of them are shaking—but their businesses, some their livelihoods, some had health ramifications, and it's still going on? This even when we put forward many alternatives: Engineers in our midst and piledriving that is quieter, that could be conducted in a non-obtrusive way. It certainly is being conducted, even in this project, where vested interests are concerned; it is being conducted at York University, being conducted in Europe, where it would be illegal in most jurisdictions to have this kind of piledriving in such a densely populated area.

Here is a taste of what's to come with Bill 163—just a taste of how little consultation, what little transparency and what the end result will be. Now imagine, after knowing and after putting forward their concerns and petitions here, in person in the Legislature, through their elected representatives, getting nothing in response except, "We're looking at it. We're looking at it." Imagine then being told by the sister agency here, Metrolinx, that not only will the piledriving go on ad infinitum, as it's currently set out to do, but at the end of it, instead of electric trains running along the tracks behind your homes and your businesses, will be diesel trains—polluting diesel trains—at the rate of about 400 a day, where currently about 49 pass by. Imagine that.

We have, along those tracks, just in my riding—and remember, this is not my riding alone that's going to be affected; this is going to affect everybody who lives along this rail line. In my riding alone we have new condominium developments going up right by the rails; we have Options for Homes, a wonderful endeavour, right by the rails; we have the Gladstone Hotel, certainly a go-to place for all of the artists and cultural folk in my neighbourhood and others, right by the rails. All of these are going to be affected, disastrously so, if Metrolinx goes ahead with this plan, again without consultation, again without transparency—400 diesel trains a day.

When we asked Metrolinx, "Why don't you have a town hall? Why don't you meet with the residents? Why don't you meet with the Ontario Clean Train Coalition," a group specifically set up to advocate for electric trains, they said, "Well, this is enough," as we wandered around an open gym with information, and people answering questions about the information—but nobody to engage with the public, nobody to answer their real concerns and nobody responsive to them to say why diesel and then electric. This is their plan: diesel for about 10 years, and then electric. It doesn't make any sense. It certainly wouldn't make any sense to a business person. You have one kind of train go in and then you replace the entire fleet in 10 years? It's about short-term gain. That's what

the planning is here. When asked, the minister, Mr. Jim Bradley, said, "Electric trains are too expensive. Quiet piledriving is too expensive." This is the response from the minister. This is what all this public action and organization comes to: They're not worth it. That's what Jim Bradley, the transportation minister, is saying to my constituents and others: "You're not worth the extra money. Your neighbourhoods, your businesses, your homes, your families and your health aren't worth the extra money it would take to put in quieter piledriving systems, to put in electric trains right away. You're not worth it."

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Bill 163 basically carves in stone the intransigence, the lack of transparency and the lack of accountability that we're already seeing from GO-Metrolinx. It puts it directly under the control of the transportation manager and makes it completely unaccountable until 2013. It basically has kicked off every elected representative on the board.

I know the people sometimes have problems with politicians. I know that we can be the subject of much ridicule and dislike. But let me tell you, there's recourse: If you don't like what a politician or your representative does, don't vote for them; don't elect us next time. But what do we do about the bureaucrats? What do we do about the Tom Parkinsons who walk away after doing, notably, not what we would consider a wonderful job at Hydro One with \$4.8 million in his pocket? He wasn't elected to that role; he was appointed to that role. You can guess that he was appointed to that role because of his political connections, but we can't get rid of him as a public. We can't hold him to account except through the minister to whom he reports. Here we have Prichard now, going to report to who? Jim Bradley, the transportation minister. Again, he's not going to be having open and transparent meetings. He's not going to be here in question period to question. He and this new corporation are going to be meeting behind closed doors, are going to be unaccountable to those—and I have to repeat this—who are paying their salaries. We're talking about public servants here—particularly well-paid public servants, but public servants who should be accountable and who aren't accountable except through their minister, which brings it back to him and, through him, right back to Dalton McGuinty.

But the problem is, these folk go on right until after the next election. So even if another government comes in, the people's choice, let's say, it's the same old bureaucrats, the same difficult-to-get-rid-of bureaucrats, because to get rid of them, you've got to pay them sums like \$4.8 million. That's why they're so hard to get rid of: They have airtight contracts. We politicians, we spokespeople for our residents and our constituents, we can be disposed of; these folk can't.

I have to say, this is a very disturbing trend that is happening not only where Bill 163 is concerned, but right across the board in government. This is the neo-Liberal style of technocratic government, where what goes on in question period doesn't really count for much, nobody

really cares, because what's really governing the province are bureaucrats, high-paid bureaucrats in bureaucracies where they are unassailable, unreachable and unaccountable.

The hope, of course, of our Liberal friends across the aisle is that they'll put Liberal sympathizers in those roles and they'll do their bidding. But let me tell you, that can even backfire on them because even they won't be able to get rid of these folk if they don't do their bidding. So you have this shadow government, and that's what this is going to create. It's going to be a shadow government that's going to rule over transportation right across Ontario. Right across Ontario, all public transportation dollars are going to be ruled over by an unaccountable, non-transparent bureaucracy, a highly paid bureaucracy, friends of the government, but we can't get rid of them and we don't even get to hear from them until 2013. That's sad, and that's going to make situations like the piledriving in the West Diamond project even worse. That's going to get us electric trains even later because we have no way of knowing how much money they're going to direct to public transit itself, never mind electric versus diesel, vibratory versus diesel piledrivers. We don't have an input into that. We have no input into that anymore, except through Bradley, except through Dalton, and even then, if we get rid of them, we're still stuck with the same bureaucrats.

We in the New Democratic Party have a number of concerns about this, and so should every single Ontarian, because we know this government has a track record of putting way more money into roads—cars, let's say—than they have of putting into public transit. We've been fighting for that on this side of the House constantly. I know that our transportation critic, the member from Toronto—Danforth, who did the lead on this, has been fighting for that since he was elected. But this is not going to get us any closer to that halcyon time when we have the option, many of us in Ontario, of taking public transit, which many Ontarians do not have the option of.

This agency could, in fact, in theory, put all its money into roads and none into public transit; in theory it could. In theory it can do what it wants. That's what's so frightening about this. And how are we going to challenge it? We're not going to be allowed into the board meetings; we're not going to be allowed to say whether Mr. Prichard gets a raise or whether he gets fired—not we, not the average Ontarian. We can't even get rid of them in the next election. We have got to live with it and live with whatever they decide right until 2013, when they report, and then we're going to have to swallow hard and listen. I mean, it's absolutely egregious.

So like my friend from Durham, although for different reasons, we have some real concerns. Number one, as I've just said, this bill is going to reduce transparency and accountability, pure and simple. It's going to replace elected officials with bureaucrats. Bureaucrats are unaccountable to anybody.

Secondly, this bill doesn't give priority, certainly not enough priority, to public transit, which is what most

Ontarians want. I remember when my husband and I used to live in Richmond Hill. Quite frankly, the GO train in those days, unless you worked 9 to 5, didn't work very well for you, so we ended up having to drive. That is the kind of situation that we need addressed in the province. This bill won't do that. In fact, this bill could put more money into highways.

Thirdly, there is real concern, and this I haven't touched on yet, that this bill will open the door to down-loading costs onto municipalities without proper consultation. Well, if our experience in Parkdale—High Park is any indication of without consultation, I can tell you for sure it will. But second of all, of course, it's a nice backdoor way of the government getting out of funding public transit because they're removed, one remove, from those who are allocating the funding. We've seen this in the LHINs, and now we're going to see it with transportation and Bill 163.

This is this government's way of doing business, and, in fact, it leads to a lack of sincerity and a lack of seriousness in this very Legislature. We can see that with the change in standing orders, we can see it with the press gallery emptying out, and we can see it because instead of elected representatives, we're going to have a province run by bureaucrats behind closed doors.

Fourthly, there is concern that discussions of how to finance regional transit are being delayed up to four more years, which I talked about, 2013; conveniently, of course, and these timings are always convenient, after the next election. That's when we'll hear what the plan really is.

And fifthly, and this is where I have to disagree with my friend from Durham, this opens the door to privatization in transportation. And don't think that agenda isn't there; certainly, it is there. We've seen the complete travesty of Highway 407 and what has resulted there with privatization. Imagine a province with lots of Highway 407s. Imagine a province where privatization takes hold. If anybody has been to some countries in South America, you will know what chaos ensues when you have private companies taking over public transit. You have many different lines owned by many different companies, all going poorly in the same direction. That is the privatization model. We don't want it in Ontario. Ontarians don't want it in Ontario. But we don't know what this mystery board of the new GO-Metrolinx will want. Maybe they have friends in high places, too. Maybe they have friends who walk out of their former jobs, like Prichard did, with \$9.8 million in their pockets. Again, one might claim we're being suspicious, but usually people who have jobs like that are working in large corporations—private corporations for the most part, with the exception of people like Parkinson etc.

Private corporations, private corporate folk sitting on the board, doling out private and public money, is our great fear, again, with private money going to those who have a say. I can tell you from my business background that any corporation worth investing in does not invest in anything without expectation of a profit. If they did so,

you would want to withdraw any investment you have from said corporation because they're not doing their job. The question is, where does the profit come from in public transportation—or anything else, for that matter? We've seen it as well in health care, where we have privately-publicly funded hospitals and the disaster, i.e. Brampton, that has wreaked.

They want profit. Where will it come from? We know it will come from us. It will come from the taxpayer, as it normally does, or it will come from the quality of transportation we see. That is probably our primary concern next to the lack of accountability and transparency, that this is in fact a backdoor method of privatizing some of what should be our public transportation strategy in Ontario.

Just to wrap up, I want to get back to the folk in my riding, my constituents, who've had to put up with the piledrivers and will put up with 400 diesel trains running past their children playing soccer, running past their hospitals, running past their businesses, running past their newly purchased condos, running past their homes, shaking their foundations to the core and polluting the air while they do so. Diesel trains pollute, end of story. They won't have a say about that. They won't be able to go to the meetings. They won't be able to kick out the people who made this happen because Mr. Bradley will point at the board and the board will point at Mr. Bradley, and the question will be, where does the accountability stop? I'm here to say to all of those residents and constituents across Ontario who are listening, I can tell you where the buck stops: It stops with Bill 163, it stops with stopping Bill 163, it stops with Jim Bradley, the transportation minister.

Please, all of those folks out there who don't want piledrivers behind your house, don't want diesel trains running past your backyard, write in to Mr. Jim Bradley. Let him know how you feel. Let him know how you feel about Bill 163 and this new mega-agency stocked with bureaucrats you won't get to talk to, you won't get to know and you won't get to hold to account. Hold someone to account. Hold Mr. Bradley, the transportation minister, to account because that's who should be held to account—and Dalton McGuinty, the Premier of this province, from whom all decisions flow.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Pursuant to the order of the House dated April 7, 2009, I am now required to put the question: Mrs. Jeffrey has moved third reading of Bill 163. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

A recorded vote being required, it will be deferred until after question period today.

Third reading vote deferred.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Orders of the day. The Minister of Northern Development.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: We have no further government business this morning.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): There being no further business, this House is in recess until 10:30 of the clock.

The House recessed from 1004 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Bruce Crozier: It's my pleasure to welcome to the Legislature today members of the Insurance Community Action Network and the Insurance Bureau of Canada, and just to remind the members that there's a reception in the legislative dining room this evening from 5 to 7.

Mr. Charles Sousa: I'd like to welcome today the family of our page Eric Bryce from Mississauga South. In the east gallery we have his mother, Susan Bryce, his father, Robert Bryce, and his youngest sister, Laura Bryce. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Mike Colle: Also with us today we have Peter Kerigorgious, who's a leading member of our very strong Greek-Canadian community in Toronto and a great worker within our public schools. Peter Kerigorgious, welcome.

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: I'm delighted to introduce to you the students from the French immersion school at Regal Road public school. They are in grade 5 and their teachers are Madame Straub and Moira Esteves. Welcome.

ORAL QUESTIONS

PROTECTION OF WORKERS

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: My question is for the Premier. Premier, it's about the failure of two of your ministers to respond responsibly to abuse allegations involving a Liberal member of Parliament, Ruby Dhalla.

Premier, you indicated yesterday that the Minister of Labour will attend the federal committee hearings dealing with the issue, but after question period yesterday, the minister said in the scrum that he will confine his comments to talking about federal legislation; in other words, continued stonewalling on what transpired following his meeting with the nannies, and no explanation for his and the Minister of Education's moral and ethical failures. Premier, is that the direction your office gave to the Minister of Labour?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I appreciate the opportunity to speak to this again. I have a copy of the letter that was received by Minister Fonseca's office from a procedural clerk from the parliamentary committee, I gather, that invited Mr. Fonseca to attend. It says specifically that "lines of inquiry will ... touch on the live-in caregiver program as a means to facilitate the employment of migrant labour in Canada, and the minister's views of how it operates in Ontario."

I'm taking the federal government and the members on that committee at their word. I think we have a shared responsibility to find better ways to work together to provide better protections to our live-in caregivers. I think that's the purpose of the committee hearings, those are my expectations of the committee hearings, and that's why Minister Fonseca said that he would be pleased to attend.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: That's a familiar refrain: Blame it on the federal government. It sounds like a negotiation occurred here.

Premier, it's more than passing strange that only one minister who opted to keep serious abuse allegations about a prominent Liberal under wraps is appearing before the federal committee. Minister Wynne, who likes to get on her high horse about the need for school staff and teachers to report serious incidents, apparently failed to do exactly what she preaches others to do. She claims that she contradicted her own stance on reporting when it involved Ms. Dhalla, and went home for a good night's sleep.

Premier, why are you not allowing the Minister of Education—she was invited as well—to appear before the federal committee to explain why she failed these vulnerable women? Are you again picking winners and losers? Are you hanging Minister Fonseca out to dry?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I choose to take the federal government committee members at their word when they tell us they want to speak specifically about the employment of migrant labour in Canada and the minister's views of how it operates in Ontario. There is someone charged with that special responsibility in our government, and that is the Minister of Labour, Minister Fonseca. He is clearly the appropriate representative to attend, on behalf of our government, this committee hearing, and that is why he has agreed to attend.

Again, I know that my honourable colleague has a different perspective on this, but I think what we owe Ontarians and Canadians is to find a way for both levels of government to work well together to provide better protections to our live-in caregivers. We have a responsibility with respect to employment standards; they have a responsibility with respect to an immigration program. I think that we're at our best when we do these kinds of things together.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: The failure of your two ministers to respond appropriately to the alarming stories from these two vulnerable women is really your failure. In opposition, you talked about the high standards of conduct that you demanded from ministers and now, in government, it seems that almost anything goes. "I have a majority. We can do whatever we want. Let them eat cake": That is today's Dalton McGuinty.

Premier, the Members' Integrity Act states that members are forbidden from promoting, or "to further another

person's private interest." That's what has happened here. Your ministers attempted to further Ms. Dhalla's interests by keeping the nannies' allegations quiet.

Premier, show us that you were truthful when you talked about high standards for cabinet ministers. Fire both these ministers for conflict of interest and for failure to protect vulnerable women.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: If my honourable colleague is serious about the allegations he's making here, he knows that he can write to the Integrity Commissioner and seek her opinion on this issue.

I believe that both of my ministers acted responsibly. They attended a public event to which they had invited live-in caregivers. They listened to their stories. They heard allegations. They made it clear that there were certain means by which they could seek to follow up on those. They did not seek to assess and weigh one story against another. They did nothing more than invoke due process. I think that's a responsibility here that we have, certainly in government, to ensure that we follow due process, and both ministers respected that.

GOVERNMENT ADVERTISING

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: Back to the Premier. Contradicting what he told voters when he was in opposition were strongly held beliefs seems to be an almost daily occurrence with this Premier, regrettably. I'd like to ask the Premier to explain why he has proposed an amendment to his recent budget bill that reduces accountability and transparency. Specifically, the Premier's amendment would remove the requirement for government advertising to contain numerical data that are supportable.

Premier, why are you so anxious to give yourself the freedom to torque information in your advertising?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: There were a number of amendments in the budget bill dealing with government advertising which the government has withdrawn, so that we have the opportunity to work with the Provincial Auditor to ensure that the process works efficiently, still protecting, still adhering to the letter of the intent of our original legislation, which is to get rid of the kinds of government advertising that went on here prior to 2004.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: I'd like some clarity from the minister with respect to this. I would suggest that ensuring the data are supportable is the very equivalent of accountability. Simply put, the amendment that we were told had been tabled for clause-by-clause discussion on Thursday would give you the opportunity to spin a positive angle on negative policies. So I would ask the Minister of Finance to clarify: Is that amendment still on the table? Is this the intent of the government: to give themselves the ability to put their data on the table without the Auditor General having the opportunity to ensure its accuracy?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: We are withdrawing the amendments to the bill with respect to the government advertising legislation that we brought forward, in order to have more opportunity to discuss it with the Auditor General so that, as we improve the ability to oversee government advertising, we have better accountability, things move more quickly and we can have a consensus with the Auditor General on how to do that.

1040

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: I'm not sure if we're getting clarity with respect to the minister's and the government's intentions here related to government advertising. We're especially concerned with respect to the initiative related to the bringing in of the McGuinty sales tax on July 1, 2010. We're concerned because there's going to be an attempt to use taxpayers' dollars to put out information to the public that provides inappropriate and inaccurate details with respect to the real cost implications for all Ontarians.

I'm asking the minister once again to clarify that that is not the intention of the government, to use taxpayers' dollars to use their spin with respect to the implications of this massive new McGuinty sales tax.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I can confirm for the member that we won't do what his government did. I will table with the House today an example of government advertising that had pictures of ministers on it, was clearly designed to influence public opinion, was clearly partisan in nature and cost taxpayers tens of millions of dollars.

We have withdrawn the amendments in order to have the opportunity to work with the Auditor General to ensure that the kinds of abuse that occurred in government advertising prior to 2003 never happen again.

PENSION PLANS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Premier. This government's Bill 162 removes any legal obligation it has to provide financial assistance to the Ontario pensions benefit guarantee fund.

To date, Ontario has provided a long-term repayable loan whenever the fund was insufficient to protect Ontario's pensions. Such a loan has always been repaid over time through employer premiums to the fund. How does this government justify changing the rules and backing away from the fund at a time when Ontario pensions are most at risk?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: In fact, what the amendments do is give the government more flexibility to respond to any number of situations. The member is right: In the case of Stelco, we provided a loan of \$150 million to help keep that pension alive. That member and her party voted against that. We also need to deal with the reality that "too big to fail" was perhaps the biggest failure of all. Every one of those companies that was supposed to

be too big to fail—other than GM, and we'll have clear information on GM shortly—wound up failing.

There is a real issue with the pension benefits guarantee fund that has been underfunded for many years. GM, Nortel, AbitibiBowater—the amounts to stabilize and provide that are not present. It's incumbent on all of us to work together to try and get through these challenging circumstances—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you, Minister. Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: This minister is not fooling anyone. What he wants is the flexibility to walk away from the fund. Up until now, Ontario has always stood behind the fund so that it can honour its claims. Now, in the midst of the worst pension crisis that this province has seen, the McGuinty government introduced new provisions in Bill 162 that explicitly say it has no obligation, under any circumstances, to provide bridge financing to the fund, even if that means the fund could not honour its claims. The Premier has made it clear that the government won't provide the same sort of assistance to the fund that it has in the past. With pensions of tens of thousands of workers at risk, why won't this government commit to standing behind the pension benefits guarantee fund?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The reality is that no government has stood behind that fund. The reality is that there's no money in that fund. The reality is that we have to be fair to not only those pensioners but to taxpayers, to those Ontarians who have seen their life savings diminished as a result of recent market conditions.

That being said, specifically in the case of General Motors, the best way to protect the pensions of General Motors workers is to keep the company viable. That's why we're at the table. That's why we have already flowed cash. That member and her party voted against those initiatives. We think that is the correct course of action. We think it's time for all parties in this Legislature to come together and acknowledge the fact that the pension benefits guarantee fund has not been properly funded since 1981.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Here's a dose of reality for the minister. The pensions of tens of thousands of workers and retirees at GM, at Chrysler, Nortel, AbitibiBowater and many other companies are at risk. At the precise time that these workers need reassurance from the government that their pensions are secure, the McGuinty government is putting forward legislation that says, "You're on your own. Your provincial government has no legal responsibility to safeguard your pensions." That's the kind of response that workers get from their government.

New Democrats think that's wrong. We think that's absolutely wrong and we're going to be introducing amendments to Bill 162 requiring the province to provide the bridge financing to the guarantee fund. My question is this: Will the Premier do the right thing by thousands of worried workers in this province and instruct govern-

ment members to support these amendments when they come to a final vote at the finance committee this Thursday?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I certainly hope any amendments they put forward show more foresight than the “too big to fail” plan that they put in place in 1992.

We are attempting as a government to strike a balance, to be fair to all people, to be fair to taxpayers, to be fair to pensioners and to be fair to those people who have seen their life savings diminished as a result of challenges in financial markets. There is no easy way out of this. There is no way to simply legislate a fix. We are going to have to work together.

I would remind the member opposite that in the situation of Chrysler, the pension has been protected through the resolution of that company's financial challenges. Our government continues to work with the federal government and the government of the United States to try and stabilize General Motors. That is in fact the best way to protect pensions at that company.

CHILD CARE

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My second question is to the Premier. It's a difficult time for mothers in Ontario. Last week we heard from new mothers like Vera Trevisanello, who told us that her job was no longer there for her when she returned from maternity leave. Today, joining us in the Legislature, there are mothers who cannot find affordable child care for their children. They're not alone. Tens of thousands of Ontario families are stuck waiting for child care subsidies in this province.

When is this government going to take action to ensure that all new mothers have access to decent, affordable child care?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I appreciate the opportunity to speak to this issue and I know it's very important to our young families in particular. I want to provide a couple of assurances: First of all, there's a recognition that there's more work to be done. We have made some progress. The second assurance I want to provide is that mothers and dads and municipalities might be aware that the federal government had committed to some funding to preserve some 8,000 spaces. That funding is due to lapse in March of the coming year. We want to provide an assurance to parents that we will continue to provide funding right through to September so that parents know that, coming this September, they can put their kids in a program that will last for the full 12 months. We'll pick up the extra cost to provide that certainty and that breathing space for those parents.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Not only are there thousands of Ontario families waiting for child care, but another 22,000 child care spaces are at risk of being cut in September. The government's one-time ad hoc \$18 million simply does not cut it. It won't save the child care spaces that are at risk. It won't provide certainty to municipalities, to child care centres and their staff and to the par-

ents who need that. It won't do anything at all to reduce the growing waiting lists in this province. When will the government admit that there is a critical lack of affordable child care and put in place an action plan to end Ontario's child care backlog?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I want to remind my honourable colleague that there is some good news today. Ontario taxpayers, together, through their government have agreed that we will continue to fund those spaces for the following year while we continue our conversations with the federal government.

I also want to remind my honourable colleague that there are 22,000 new spaces built, including over 4,000 in Toronto; over 3,000 in northern Ontario; close to 2,100 in Hamilton and Niagara region, my colleague's community; 1,500 in eastern Ontario; 1,400 in the Peel region; 700 in Windsor; and 650 in Waterloo. That's progress, but as I say, there is more work to be done.

1050

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The McGuinty government is simply missing the boat when it comes to child care. There's nothing at all in its anti-poverty strategy around child care, nothing in its 2009 budget on child care. Ontario needs a child care program like the one in Quebec or in Manitoba. In Ontario child care costs parents \$40 to \$60 a day; in Quebec it costs \$7 a day.

I need to remind the Premier, child care is a provincial responsibility. This government must provide young children with quality, affordable care so their parents can go back to school, can upgrade their training and skills, or perhaps just go to work. When is this Premier going to implement a comprehensive child care program that protects existing spaces and brings in at least 7,500 new spaces this year?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: The point with which I will agree, the one that my honourable colleague makes, is that there is more work to be done. But I do want to recognize as well the work that has been done. Again, we are providing parents with an assurance that we will pick up the tab for those 8,000 federally funded spaces for the coming year, to provide them with that breathing space while we continue our conversation with the federal government.

We have built 22,000 new spaces, but beyond that, there are other things we've done to help parents with young children. We are essentially doubling our Ontario child benefit from \$50 to \$92 per month, per child, which we think is pretty important. We have 530,000 children in smaller classes. Ten thousand more children are receiving mental health support. We have an expanded newborn screening program that is now covering 28 diseases. It's the best of its kind in the country.

I could go on, but the point is this—and I'm sure my friend would want to recognize this: We have made some progress, I think it is substantial, and we both agree there is more to be done.

TORONTO CATHOLIC DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: To the Minister of Education: Here I have with me a copy of a letter sent to the director of education for the Toronto Catholic District School Board. It's dated August 2007 and it comes from your labour relations and governance branch. It clearly states, "Current legislation does not permit trustees to access group life, accident, medical and dental benefits that are provided to employees." And yet, Minister, the trustees of the Toronto Catholic District School Board, against the advice of your staff and board staff, proceeded to vote themselves access to these benefits—

Interjection.

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: —and I see you're smiling, so you know all about it.

Minister, can you tell the people of Ontario why you waited one year to address a clear-cut violation of the Education Act? Once again, you got caught by the press.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: In fact, between the fall of 2006 and the spring of 2008, when we actually put that board, the Toronto Catholic District School Board, under supervision, there was an ongoing attempt to bring that board into compliance with ministry policies.

It's a very good question in the sense that I think the public needs to know that in the fall of 2006, we appointed a special assistance team to report on the Toronto Catholic District School Board's overspending and to address the structural deficit problems that they were having. On December 6, my staff from the ministry sent a letter to all directors, talking about compliance with provincial school board expense guidelines; in January 2007, there was a motion that was approved by the board that wasn't in compliance; and in the next week, later in January, there were communications from the ministry about how the board should come into compliance. And that—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: Well, Minister, I don't know how long it takes to say, "Cease and desist, and pay the money back." All this process did not serve the people of Ontario well. The truth is that you knew about this violation—it's a violation of your own ministry policy—and you refused to sanction the TCDSB trustees who illegally voted themselves this raise at the taxpayers' expense.

Your integrity is being compromised here, Minister, on a number of fronts: first of all, failure to report the abuse of nannies in your own community; then failure to include consequences for your principals who failed to report student-on-student violence; and failure to take action on trustees who were in clear violation of rules until a year later.

Minister, your actions are not transparent. You have not been accountable. Do you believe your conduct in two recent events qualifies you to keep your job? Your credibility—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you, Minister?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I'm going to set the personal attack aside and I am going to answer the substance of the question, because I think it's important that people understand that in so many situations in government, there is due process that must be followed. If the member opposite took a moment to speak with the member for Kitchener–Waterloo, who has also sent in supervisors to school boards—and I am personally aware of those situations—then she would understand that it is very important that a minister follow the rules and that in this situation, until it was clear that this board was not willing to comply, it was impossible, and it would have been wrong, for me to begin to initiate the process of taking over this board.

Having said that, we began in the fall of 2006 to work with this board to try to get them into compliance. It didn't work. They are under supervision, and they are under supervision—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you, Minister.

PROTECTION FOR WORKERS

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: My question is to the Minister of Labour. Today, caregivers Magdalene Gordo and Richelyn Tongson testified before the House of Commons citizenship and immigration committee. These women outlined gross violations of the provincial Employment Standards Act, which included 14-hour workdays, unpaid overtime and constant harassment by their employer.

How is it that the minister allowed these abuses to take place under his watch?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: I'd like to thank the member for the opportunity to speak to what is happening before the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration in Ottawa.

We have said that we would like the opportunity to bring forward what we are hearing from these caregivers. We're hearing at the roundtables and we've heard at the ministry boardroom table that we have a flawed and broken live-in caregiver program. The problem with the program is that there is an imbalance between employers and employees. This profound imbalance allows for these abuses to take place. These women live in fear. They are not calling our employment standards office because they fear that they may be deported by a flawed federal—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: These vulnerable women disclosed almost slave-like conditions in Ontario. When asked how she felt working in the Dhalla household, Magdalene Gordo said that she was mentally tortured, and Richelyn Tongson broke down into tears. These testimonies are a direct condemnation of Dalton McGuinty's failure to enforce his own Employment Standards Act. This is shameful; the minister is shameful.

Is this the standard for employment standards in Dalton McGuinty's Ontario?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: I will not take a lecture from that member or lessons from that member when it comes

to treating and protecting vulnerable workers in this province. What I will do is continue to meet with the caregivers. At that particular roundtable, where we heard from many live-in caregivers and these two in particular, we provided them with immediate access to our ministry officials through a 1-800 hotline.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): You have 10 seconds.

Hon. Peter Fonseca: I was happy to hear in that committee meeting this morning that those live-in caregivers have called the hotline and have received assistance from our ministry officials. That is the right approach, I say to the member—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you, Minister.

1100

ASSISTANCE TO FAMILIES

Mrs. Laura Albanese: My question is for Minister of Children and Youth Services. It is very important for families to have access to high-quality, affordable child care. Since coming to office, our government has made great progress in expanding the affordability and the availability of child care, despite the federal government's cancellation of our child care agreement.

Recently, however, there have been reports that because of the federal funding shortfall, municipalities may have to reduce the number of child care spaces and fee subsidies available to parents beginning this summer. This is causing great concern in the riding of York South-Weston and beyond.

The Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care is at Queen's Park today to express their concern regarding the impact of the end of the federal funding for Ontario families. Minister, could you elaborate on how the province plans to maintain the progress we've made despite the reduction in federal child care funding?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you to the member for a question that is so very important for families and children in Ontario.

I am very pleased to announce that we're stepping in with \$18 million to provide stability for families with kids in child care. This investment will give municipalities the support they need to maintain the existing spaces through the 2009-10 school year and into the summer. It will give us more time to continue advocating on behalf of Ontario families with the federal government. It will also provide greater stability in the system leading up to the anticipated implementation of full-day learning for four- and five-year-olds based on the recommendations of our early learning adviser, Charles Pascal.

We know that now more than ever families need this stability. We won't leave them hanging because of the federal shortfall. I am encouraging families—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mrs. Laura Albanese: Parents in my riding simply want the services to work. They are not concerned with

which level of government provides them; they just want the services to be there. It's great to know that the province is coming to the table to deal with this very serious matter.

It's not just members of our community who have been asking but also municipal governments. They are on the frontline of delivering services to the most vulnerable members of society. They do the best job that they can, but, with limited resources, it's just not enough to meet the demand.

Families also, I must say, speak to me often about issues of affordable, clean housing. Access to affordable housing is fundamental to raising children who will be at their best, but municipal governments need help in meeting these demands. More than anything, they are asking for a stable funding formula that will work for them as well as for us.

Minister, what is our government doing to—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Minister?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: To the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

Hon. Jim Watson: I thank the honourable member for the question. Minister Matthews and I appeared before the memorandum-of-understanding table with AMO, which is an organization that has been set up by Premier McGuinty to allow us to consult the municipal sector. Minister Matthews heard first-hand from AMO and the municipal leaders the challenges that they would face this year without the funding for daycare in place. I'm very pleased with the Premier's announcement and Minister Matthews's confirmation of that announcement.

On the issue of housing, I will let you know how excited the housing community was when Minister Duncan, in his budget, committed over \$622 million to match the federal government's funding announcement, for a total of \$1.2 billion. We were able to convince the federal government to come back to the table for housing. We hope that we're going to be able to convince the federal government to come back to the table to support child care, which is vitally needed in this province and across Canada—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

WINE INDUSTRY

Mr. Randy Hillier: My question is to the Minister of Agriculture. As I was doing a little research for the question today, I typed into Google "Dalton McGuinty's promises" and it came back, "Did you mean 'broken promises?'" Then it came up with the top 50 list of broken promises. It was things like the rollback of tolls and coal-fired plants.

Anyway, Minister, last week, I asked you about Bill 132 and the sale of fruit wines at farmers' markets. You said that it's in committee, and your House leader has promised swift passage. But I have a letter from your Minister of Government Services and he says that he won't allow the sale of fruit wines at farmers' markets.

Minister, which one of you three are telling the truth? Are any of you telling the truth?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I just ask the honourable member to withdraw all three of those comments, please.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Minister?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: I appreciate the opportunity to clarify for the members of this House and for the honourable member. The bill that he inquired of me about last week has had second reading debate, so it is now up to the House leaders to decide where the bill and when the bill and if the bill will go further.

I, as Minister of Agriculture, have made it very clear, I've spoken with the fruit winery people, and I have some great appreciation for the points that they have made and the fact that they have talked to me about establishing pilot projects for the sale of fruit wines. That is an idea that I have indicated publicly I support. I stand by that, and that is the truth.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Randy Hillier: Again to the minister: Here is a letter dated April 28 from the Minister of Government Services to Mr. Bert Andrews. "My ministry does not have any plans to allow the sale of fruit wines at farmers' markets."

We've heard three different tunes and three different stories. Where I come from, honourable people are honest. There are no lies or misleading and the—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd just ask the honourable member to withdraw those comments, please.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Misgivings. Dear minister—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): No, you need to say withdraw.

Mr. Randy Hillier: I withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Dear minister, will you ask for forgiveness and apologize to this House and the countrymen for your government's misleading statements?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I ask the honourable member to withdraw that last comment, please.

I ask the honourable member for the second time to withdraw the comment, please.

I ask the honourable member for the third time to withdraw the comment, please.

I therefore will have to name the member from Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington, Randy Hillier, and ask the Sergeant at Arms to escort him from the chamber, please.

Mr. Hillier was escorted from the chamber.

SERVICES EN FRANÇAIS

FRENCH-LANGUAGE SERVICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: Jeudi dernier, le commissaire aux services en français, M. François Boileau, a déposé son premier rapport spécial sur la planification des services de santé en français en Ontario. Ma question est très simple : qu'est-ce que le ministre de la Santé a l'intention d'en faire ?

Hon. David Caplan: First of all, I want to thank the member very much. I want to thank the French language commissioner for his report. I'd like to let the member know that our government is committed to ensuring that all Ontarians receive the highest quality of health care, particularly those in the francophone community.

I'd like to thank the commissioner for his report. We are presently reviewing it and looking at its recommendations. Further to that end, I've set up a working group led by Charles Beer, a former MPP and minister in this place. This group brings together members from the francophone community, from local health integration networks, from the Ministry of Health and from the Ontario francophone association to gather input about the approach to local health integration network francophone community engagement. It's very important to me that as a government we understand that we have a special obligation to two groups: our Franco-Ontarians and to—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

M^{me} France Gélinas: Le comité dont le ministre nous parle, présidé par M. Charles Beer, avait déjà été mis en place avant que le comité ait fait son rapport. Le rapport du commissaire démontre clairement l'urgence d'agir. La communauté francophone veut que les quatre réseaux existants des services de santé en français soient le mécanisme d'engagement des RLIS envers eux.

Étant donné la réponse du ministre à ma première question, ma deuxième question est encore plus simple : est-ce qu'on doit en déduire, par la réponse du ministre, qu'il n'a pas l'intention de faire quoi que ce soit avec les recommandations du commissaire ?

1110

Hon. David Caplan: In fact, it's fully my intent to follow the legislation that was passed in this House, that we set up a special arrangement to be able to consult and to work, to plan and deliver services where we have two very special obligations, one with our First Nation partners, and the other with the Ontario francophone community. We certainly will be doing this, and my intent is to make sure that we get this regulation right, which is why we are making a tremendous effort, along with my colleague the minister of francophone affairs, to work with members of the francophone community to establish that relationship and the legal framework that it will work under.

I know that there is a lot of input which has gone into this, I know that the ministry has worked hard, and I know that it was because of the efforts of my colleague that the Office of the French Language Services Commissioner was created, to improve the overall delivery of French-language services in the province of Ontario.

As I said, I look forward to reviewing the report—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

NURSES

Mr. Bruce Crozier: My question is for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Yesterday marked the beginning of National Nursing Week in Canada, and I'm

pleased to say that today is International Nurses Day. The day commemorates all of the important work nurses do in health care systems around the world.

There are many qualified health professionals who have been trained and educated abroad who want to practise in Ontario, and I know that many of these nurses have an aptitude and willingness to work in Ontario's health care system. They could help fill many nursing positions in the province.

I'm asking the minister to tell the House what this government is doing to help internationally trained and educated nurses get the necessary training they need to practise in Ontario.

Hon. David Caplan: I'd like to thank the member for the question; it's an important one. And I'd like to thank my colleague for taking the time to mention International Nurses Day, because it gives me a chance to express the appreciation that I have and that members, at least on this side of the House, have for Ontario nurses. They work tirelessly to keep the province's health care system strong, and our government is working hard to help internationally educated nurses get the skills they need to work in Ontario.

Our government has already invested nearly \$7 million in a program called CARE, Creating Access to Regulated Employment. It's a bridge training project for internationally trained nurses. The program helps to prepare nurses to take the Canadian nursing registration exam.

We also created the Access Centre for Internationally Educated Health Professionals, to help nurses learn about the steps they need to take to practise professionally in Ontario.

I'm determined to continue helping internationally trained nurses find work in Ontario. They're making our health—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Bruce Crozier: The initiative to help train internationally educated nurses sounds promising, and I'm sure that the Ontario health care system will benefit.

My constituents, for example, are encouraged by the recent announcement of a nurse-practitioner-led clinic in the riding of Essex. I know that this is a new way of delivering health care, and one that has seen a lot of success in Sudbury, for example. My constituents are pleased to have access to more primary health care, but are seeking clarification about the role that a nurse practitioner can play in the community.

I also understand that yesterday, Minister, you made an announcement that would expand on the range of things that nurse practitioners can do for patients. Please tell the House your vision for nurse practitioners in Ontario, and why you think it's important to give them an extended role.

Hon. David Caplan: The member from Essex asks another excellent question, and I want to thank him for an important question about our hard-working nurses.

We've committed to creating 25 nurse-practitioner-led clinics around this province, making Ontario a leader in

Canada. Nurse-practitioner-led clinics are locally driven, primary health care delivery organizations. They include registered nurses, family physicians and a range of other health care professionals committed to providing comprehensive, accessible, coordinated family health care services.

Yesterday, I had the privilege to introduce Bill 179 in this House. If passed, it would allow nurse practitioners to set or cast a fracture, and dispense, mix or sell certain drugs to manage patient health.

Let there be no doubt, this government is committed to Ontario nurses. We're going to keep training them. We're going to keep hiring them. Our province depends on their skill and expertise, and our great—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

NORTHERN ONTARIO DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Norm Miller: I have a question for the Minister of Northern Development and Mines. Minister, two weeks ago, I asked your colleague the Minister of Economic Development about \$358 million that was given to Ontario from the federal government as part of the community development trust fund. To refresh your memory, the fund is intended to help one-industry towns like most of the towns in northern Ontario that are currently suffering. In light of your colleague's comments last week about picking winners and losers, can you tell me if any of this community development trust fund is being spent to help northern communities?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: To the Minister of Economic Development.

Hon. Michael Bryant: The gist of your question was directed toward the idea that the government is engaged in activist efforts to try and promote communities across this province by recognizing that we are in competition with other jurisdictions that are making investments by way of loans and grants in order to attract those businesses to those communities.

I can say without any doubt that for all those announcements that the member would have stood up and celebrated in his community because of the investments that government has made to his community, to the businesses and to the jobs there—I can assure the member that we will continue to provide that support to his community and all northern communities as we continue to make the northern Ontario economy as strong as we possibly can, using every single tool in the tool kit. At the end of the day, the members across the way know very well that they will stand up, smile and celebrate those investments, every single one of them.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Norm Miller: Minister, maybe you could send the question back to the Minister of Northern Development and Mines, because I'm trying to find out if any of the \$358 million was spent in the north.

I was up in Englehart last week and spoke with the mayor of Elk Lake, Terry Fiset. He told me he had seen the question I asked two weeks ago. He saw your answer, and he still didn't know if any money was going to the

north, so I'm trying to find out if any of this \$358 million went to the north.

The federal government's website states, "Provincial and territorial governments are encouraged to report directly to their constituents on the expenditures financed and outcomes achieved with the funding provided through the community development trust" fund.

Minister, why hasn't this been done? For the second time, could this government please tell the members of the Legislature which communities received money, how much did they get, and how much of the \$358 million is left? Did any of it go to the north?

Hon. Michael Bryant: I happily refer this to the Minister of Northern Development.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: I think it's a great opportunity for me to remind the member opposite, indeed, of the incredible economic contribution we've made through the northern Ontario heritage fund. Since 2003, when our government took office, we have made \$400 million in investments, leveraging \$1.2 billion in funding, which has gone towards creating over 9,000 jobs in northern Ontario, many of the projects in the member's riding, and we are very proud of that.

We are very proud of the fact as well that our government, the McGuinty government, is supporting an increase in the northern Ontario heritage fund: \$60 million last year, \$80 million this year and, in fact, going to \$100 million. Certainly we have made extraordinary investments in northern Ontario, a program that we have supported greater than any other government, and we're extremely pleased about the jobs—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

TAXATION

Mr. Michael Prue: My question is for the Minister of Finance. In my riding, a local small business owner and his clients will become the latest victims of the wrong-headed tax grab, the HST. My constituent Lou Martinez owns a fitness club for kids, kids who come from hard-working families who understand the lifetime health benefits of being physically active. Mr. Martinez says, "We have been trying to convince parents that children's health is important ... and we are seeing an increase in childhood obesity rates."

Why is this government making it harder for families to do the right thing and encourage physical fitness from a young age by adding an 8% tax?

1120

Hon. Dwight Duncan: In fact, we're giving that same family a personal tax cut that will more than offset the amounts of money they would spend to cover the single sales tax. That's why the Canadian Chamber of Commerce and other business organizations have supported this initiative.

I'd also remind the member that that small business owner will see his small business tax cut by almost 20%. I hope that he will pass those savings on to those customers who are using that service.

This is the right package for the times to help get our economy back on track. We believe that this tax reform package will leave people in a better financial position and help this economy grow stronger and create more jobs in the future.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Michael Prue: I will pass your comments and a copy of today's Hansard to Mr. Martinez.

My constituent has pointed out the irony: The Liberals' unfair tax grab on kids' fitness programs will cancel out the federal children's fitness tax credit. He's also very concerned about his business's long-term viability, given that the HST will increase the cost of his programs by 8%. He says, "If I thought my customers would tolerate an 8% increase, then I would've raised the price myself. Mr. McGuinty is asking me to be his tax collector by charging the families that walk through my doors—the problem is they can always leave and I predict a great many will."

Will the minister do the right thing here today and axe the tax for children's programs?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: This tax reform package will create jobs in the future. It will give the people the incomes they need to send their children to important programs like this.

Given the crisis in the world economy and what we've all experienced in the last year, the same old same old from that party just isn't going to work. You need to take a different approach. You need to take the approach that four other provinces have taken, that every other country within the OECD, save and except the United States, has done. This is a balanced tax package that will see 93% of Ontarians paying less overall in taxes. That's a good policy. That's the right policy. It's about jobs, and it's about future growth.

RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

Mr. Dave Levac: My question is for the Minister of Research and Innovation. There's absolutely no doubt that jurisdictions around the world are facing tough decisions and choices in the face of the current economic crisis. In these difficult economic times, some governments believe it's easy to cut funding for science research because it doesn't get a lot of votes. Some governments have chosen to cut science funding. For instance, the federal government recently cut the budgets of the three key federal funding agencies and provided no new funding for Genome Canada.

Some governments do get it. They want to build their future. President Obama's recent commitment to invest 3% of GDP on research shows the US and the world that President Obama understands Ontario's drive to the knowledge economy.

In looking to that future while we're facing these challenges, can the minister tell us what Ontario's stance is going to be? Are you going to walk away from our scientists, or are you going to build our future?

Hon. John Wilkinson: I say to my friend, we are going to continue to stand by our scientists, and we're

going to continue to support them. In the face of this economic crisis, this is no time for us to stop investing in our future. We say to Washington and to the world that we and our best are willing to collaborate with you, but there will be no poaching of our best in this province allowed. That's why earlier this month I was pleased to join a dozen of our world-renowned researchers who stood with our government as we announced the new \$100-million global leadership round in genomics and life sciences. This announcement sent a very clear signal to the world that we will continue to keep our leadership position, that we're willing to collaborate with the very best around the world and that we believe in the transformative power of science. Despite the signals sent by other governments, we have sent the strongest signal—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Dave Levac: I want to thank the minister for his determination to build our future and this government's commitment to do so. In the article entitled "It's Easy Seeing Green: Scientists Turn Stem Cells Bright Green for Study Purposes," the Canadian Press reported a breakthrough involving a method that turns stem cells green for study in laboratories. Dr. James Ellis, the project's lead investigator at the Hospital for Sick Children, said, "It's like having a spotlight on a person in a crowd in the dark, so you can go straight and find that person in that crowd."

Dr. Michael Rudnicki, scientific director of the Canadian Stem Cell Network, says that the research allows scientists to purify cells "mechanically and otherwise, and also to readily identify them." The researchers have already used this technique, taking skin cells from a patient with Rett syndrome, an autism spectrum disorder, and reprogramming them.

This is the type of stuff that's going on right here in Ontario to continue to foster the quality of research—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Minister?

Hon. John Wilkinson: I say again to my friend that new ideas generate the new jobs of the future for our children and our grandchildren. That's why we committed last year to Ontario's innovation agenda, a commitment of some \$3.2 billion, because innovation is one of the driving forces of the 21st-century economy.

I want to say to the Minister of Finance that last month he was able to provide an investment of some \$715 million, \$400 million of which has been earmarked toward research, both basic and applied, and another \$250 million for a new emerging technologies fund. All of these investments are designed to ensure that there are going to be those jobs for our kids.

When I go to Tim Hortons and talk to my constituents about this, they say, "The world is changing. Thank you for investing in the future of our children and our grandchildren." They get it at Tim Hortons.

CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: My question is to the Minister of Children and Youth Services, and I'm hoping she'll be

able to help the kids in my community today. The Centre Roberts/Smart Centre, which saves kids at risk from self-harm and suicide, is about to close without your help. It might be forced into bankruptcy without provincial aid, and last year alone they spent \$200,000 more than they had to save kids' lives.

In my opinion, this is work that we need to continue to fund in this province. This chamber has been bailing out industry; I need to count on you and my community needs to count on you to step up to the plate to save the Centre Roberts/Smart Centre from closing, to save the kids at risk not only in the city of Ottawa but right across the province of Ontario. Can we count on you to index their provincial transfer payments?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I want to assure the member opposite that I am very concerned about this situation and that I have instructed my ministry staff to work with the Roberts/Smart Centre to find a way to continue to provide services for kids who very definitely need them. We are committed to providing children and youth with mental health challenges and special needs with the supports they need to achieve their potential.

I want to take this opportunity to thank the board and the staff at the Roberts/Smart Centre for the work they do for kids in their community. We have been working with them for a number of years to help them become sustainable. A review and subsequent reorganization occurred in 2005 in the hope that it would put them on better financial footing.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: The end of the month is coming nigh, and the board has decided to start bankruptcy proceedings on May 30 in order to protect the 150 people who work there. Gordon Floyd, executive director of Children's Mental Health Ontario, says, "It is one of the few agencies in the province that has residential treatment for francophone children. It is generally serving kids at the deepest end." Madam Minister, we can't wait a week. We can't wait a day. When are you going to give these people assurance that they can meet their budget needs now so we can protect all kids, including francophone kids in the Ottawa area?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: As I said, I am very concerned about this. My ministry staff is working hard to make sure that kids get the services they need. I must say I am delighted to see that the members of the opposition party are now concerned about children's mental health. When they were in government, they froze funding for mental health services. We have restored funding for mental health services, we are improving services for kids, and I welcome their support for kids with mental health challenges.

CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

M^{me} France G  linas: Ma question est pour le premier ministre. Last year, half of the children and youth in Ontario who needed mental health services could not get them. The children's mental health agencies cannot meet

the needs of Ontario children and as we just heard, the Roberts/Smart Centre in Ottawa, in the Premier's hometown, is close to closing its doors because of a lack of funding. What will the Premier of this government do to ensure that this important centre is not forced to close?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you—

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Children and Youth Services.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I'm very sorry, Premier. I'm anxious to answer this question.

Again, I thank the member opposite for the question. As I said in the previous question, we are aware of the situation. We are working with the Roberts/Smart Centre. We are committed to maintaining services for kids in the Ottawa area who have serious mental health challenges. It is good work, it is important work and we are committed to continue to find a solution to this situation.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

M^{me} France Gélinas: It would be more reassuring if the minister was to make the announcement that they will continue to fund the centre. It's hard to believe that the government is serious about fixing the mental health system for children when Ottawa's only residential program is facing closure; when funding for children's mental health has been frozen for 12 of the last 15 years and the system is at the breaking point; when a residential youth facility in Hamilton closed in March; when, in London, mindyourmind.ca closed on May 1; and now in Ottawa, the Roberts/Smart Centre is in peril. When the need is so great and more must be done, how can this government justify its inaction?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I certainly reject the characterization that this is a government of inaction. In fact, we have increased funding for children's mental health by 20% since we were elected. Is there more to do? Absolutely, yes. We have a very ambitious approach to children's mental health. We are at the final stages of actually determining what services we provide across the province, which is the first step in the transformation of children's mental health in this province.

I can assure the member opposite and all people in Ontario that children's mental health is a very high priority for this government and will continue to be so.

ANSWERS TO WRITTEN QUESTIONS

Ms. Sylvia Jones: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: The 10 order paper questions that I tabled on March 2 and March 3 have not been responded to within 24 sessional days, as set out in page 48 of the standing orders, and I seek your assistance in getting those answers from the Minister of Community and Social Services and the Minister of Children and Youth Services.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I thank the honourable member for her point of order, and she is indeed correct.

I would like to remind the Minister of Community and Social Services and the Minister of Children and Youth Services that you are required under standing order 97(d)

to file an answer to a written question within 24 sitting days. Your responses are now overdue. I would ask that you give this House some indication as to when the response will be forthcoming.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I can assure the member that we will have the response in very short order.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: I will do what I can to make sure that the honourable member receives the answer in a timely fashion.

DEFERRED VOTES

GREATER TORONTO AND HAMILTON AREA TRANSIT IMPLEMENTATION ACT, 2009 LOI DE 2009 SUR L'AMÉNAGEMENT DU RÉSEAU DE TRANSPORT EN COMMUN DE LA RÉGION DU GRAND TORONTO ET DE HAMILTON

Deferred vote on the motion for third reading of Bill 163, An Act to amend the Greater Toronto Transportation Authority Act, 2006 and to make consequential amendments to another Act / *Projet de loi 163, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2006 sur la Régie des transports du grand Toronto et apportant des modifications corrélatives à une autre loi.*

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Call in the members; this will be a 10-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1133 to 1143.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Members please take their seats.

All those in favour will rise one at a time and be recorded by the Clerk.

Ayes

Aggelonitis, Sophia	Fonseca, Peter	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Albanese, Laura	Gerretsen, John	Pendergast, Leeanna
Arnott, Ted	Gravelle, Michael	Phillips, Gerry
Arthurs, Wayne	Hardeman, Ernie	Pupatello, Sandra
Bailey, Robert	Hoy, Pat	Qaadri, Shafiq
Balkissoon, Bas	Jaczek, Helena	Ramal, Khalil
Bartolucci, Rick	Jeffrey, Linda	Rinaldi, Lou
Bentley, Christopher	Johnson, Rick	Runciman, Robert W.
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Jones, Sylvia	Ruprecht, Tony
Best, Margaret	Kwintar, Monte	Sandals, Liz
Bradley, James J.	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Savoline, Joyce
Brotten, Laurel C.	Leal, Jeff	Sergio, Mario
Brown, Michael A.	Levac, Dave	Shurman, Peter
Brownell, Jim	MacLeod, Lisa	Smith, Monique
Bryant, Michael	Matthews, Deborah	Smitherman, George
Cansfield, Donna H.	McGuinty, Dalton	Sousa, Charles
Caplan, David	McMeekin, Ted	Sterling, Norman W.
Carroll, Aileen	McNeely, Phil	Takhar, Harinder S.
Chudleigh, Ted	Meilleur, Madeleine	Van Bommel, Maria
Colle, Mike	Miller, Norm	Watson, Jim
Crozier, Bruce	Millroy, John	Wilson, Jim
Dickson, Joe	Mitchell, Carol	Witmer, Elizabeth
Dombrowsky, Leona	Moridi, Reza	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Duguid, Brad	Murdoch, Bill	Yakabuski, John
Duncan, Dwight	Naqvi, Yasir	Zimmer, David
Dunlop, Garfield	O'Toole, John	
Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Oraziotti, David	

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Those opposed?**Nays**Bisson, Gilles
Gélinas, FranceHorwath, Andrea
Kormos, Peter

Tabuns, Peter

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller):

The ayes are 79; the nays are 5.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I declare the motion carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

Third reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): This House stands recessed until 3 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1147 to 1500.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS**CEMETERIES**

Mr. Bill Murdoch: On February 19, the assembly passed second reading of Bill 149, An Act to protect Ontario's inactive cemeteries, introduced by the MPP for Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry.

Since the unanimous support of this bill on second reading, my office has had numerous calls from constituents wanting to know when the bill will be sent to committee and then receive third reading and royal assent.

Bill 149 is an important bill in my riding of Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound. Like many of my fellow colleagues, my riding has a number of inactive pioneer cemeteries. These cemeteries are for many people their only link to heritage and ancestry.

Many local constituents have expressed to me their fears over the years of these pioneer cemeteries being ripped up or relocated as some of the cemeteries are located in prime real estate locations. Though nothing, thankfully, has happened so far, many constituents worry that it could.

Bill 149 would protect these pioneer cemeteries in my riding and those throughout Ontario. Bill 149 would make sure that the heritage cemeteries, such as Old Durham Road black cemetery outside of Ceylon, would be protected and that important part of Grey's history would be kept for generations to come. The Old Durham Road black cemetery is only one of the many pioneer cemeteries in my riding that need to be protected for generations to come.

I ask today that the Liberals bring Bill 149 to committee and allow it to make its way to third reading.

I would also like to thank the MPP for Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry, Jim Brownell, for introducing such an important bill to preserve Ontario's heritage.

JUNIOR HOCKEY

Mr. Dave Levac: I rise today to recognize an organization that has brought another championship home to

Brantford—hockey, that is. On Saturday, May 2, the Brantford Golden Eagles defeated the Stoney Creek Warriors 3 to 2 in game 5 of their best-of-seven series to claim the Sutherland Cup, four games to one.

The Sutherland Cup is a championship for the Greater Ontario Junior Hockey League. The cup returns home to Brantford after a 68-year absence from my community—last won by the Brantford Lions in 1941.

There are so many incredible stories that surround this season's championship run. There's the team captain, Mike McKinley, who spent the last six years with the team working to lead Brantford from the league's worst record to the best of the best.

There's star forward Alexander Szczechura, who led the team in scoring both in the regular season and the playoffs, all the while playing under the wing of his brother Paul, who made his NHL debut in the Tampa Bay Lightning. And there's goaltender Daryl Borden, an Ontario Hockey League cast-off who came home to backstop the Eagles to the title.

I would like to congratulate the coaching staff, led by Scott Rex, general manager Mike Down and the rest of his executive team, and of course the owners and the players themselves. Thank you for working so hard to bring another cup back to Brantford, the Sutherland Cup.

We celebrated this great victory by holding a Golden Eagle party in Harmony Square, showing the team that we thank them and appreciate them. Our entire community says thanks for pulling together. The sky's the limit. Way to go, Golden Eagles.

RIDING OF WELLINGTON-HALTON HILLS

Mr. Ted Arnott: Each spring, I send my constituents an annual report of my activities and my efforts on their behalf. In this year's newsletter I included a survey, and today I wish to share some of the comments I received in response.

"Taxpayers should never be asked to bail out inefficient, non-productive companies," said a man from Erin.

Another man, from Georgetown, had an ominous warning for the Premier: "If the McGuinty government harmonizes the sales tax with the federal sales tax, the Liberal Party will have lost my vote/backing forever."

Some took the time to compliment my staff.

"Just want to say a big thank you to your office staff. They helped [me] get my birth certificate," a woman from Ariss told me.

Said one man from Puslinch, "Let's do what's right for the province and the people, not the party. Can we not just work together for the good of all?"

This from Acton: "I commend Mr. Arnott's efforts in regards to the emancipation bill, disabled, as well as the economy."

Another constituent, from Ballinafad, said, "Thanks, Ted, keep up the good work."

This was balanced by criticism from Elora, from a person who said to me, "You obviously are not looking

very closely at what is taking place if all you see is doom and gloom.”

Another resident of Fergus summed it up this way: “Personally I do not trust the current provincial government.... Is it getting worse? You can bet on it.”

I want to thank everyone who replied for providing me with their suggestions, for my best advice comes from the people that I’m so privileged to represent.

CANADIAN FORCES

Ms. Leeanna Pendergast: On April 24, I had the distinct honour of attending a special welcome home gala event, entitled Celebrate Me Home: A Hero’s Welcome Gala, at Bingemans in Kitchener.

Colonel-in-Chief Prince Andrew, Duke of York, welcomed home his troops based in the Waterloo region. This was the largest return of veterans to our area since the Korean War. The veterans, almost all reservists in the Royal Highland Fusiliers of Canada, served in Afghanistan for six to nine months.

This wonderful event was attended not only by veterans, dignitaries and the public, but also by Prince Andrew, who is the regiment’s Colonel-in-Chief. Owen Lackenbauer is the honorary colonel, and Tom Jenkins, CEO of Open Text, is their honorary lieutenant colonel.

Along with the 16 local Fusiliers, there are also 42 returning soldiers from the region who are serving in other units. They’re part of a larger group of 2,500 soldiers who are returning home, from late March until early May, as part of regular troop deployments and rotation.

This homecoming is an important opportunity for our community to recognize the commitment of members of the Canadian Forces and their families to defend Canadian values. Thank you all for your continued dedication and sacrifice.

FISHING DERBY

Mr. John O’Toole: I’d like to first congratulate the sponsors, volunteers and all who contributed to the success of the Huck Finn Fishing Day, held on April 25 in my riding of Durham—in fact, in Uxbridge. This is the seventh year of the event, which takes place at the centre of the town, at Elgin Pond, and attracts thousands of young anglers and their families.

The fishing derby was initiated by Pat Higgins, of Canadian Tire in Uxbridge. Along with Canadian Tire, some of the community-minded sponsors include the Durham Regional Police Association; the Uxbridge Times-Journal; the Optimist Club of Uxbridge; Blitzcreek Pro Fishing; of course, the province of Ontario; the Uxbridge Legion, led by Jack Ballinger, who is also a local councillor; as well as Mayor Bob Shepherd, who attended, Gord Hight and Howie Herrema.

I’d also like to take special note and thank the Minister of Natural Resources, Donna Cansfield, for taking time to visit and celebrate the kids’ fishing day this year. The minister saw first-hand the community’s commitment to

the stewardship and enjoyment of Ontario’s environment and the outdoors.

Fishing day combines fun and learning, along with an opportunity for families to get together for a great event offered by the community and all of the volunteers.

I’d like to thank the minister personally for making the effort to come and celebrate kids’ fishing day in Uxbridge this year.

FIBROMYALGIA AND CHRONIC FATIGUE SYNDROME

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: I rise today to bring the attention of the members of this House and all Ontarians to the estimated one million Canadian men, women and children who suffer from fibromyalgia and chronic fatigue syndrome, commonly known as FM-CFS.

May 12 is national awareness day for fibromyalgia and chronic fatigue syndrome. FM means aching, throbbing, shooting and stabbing pain in the muscles, ligaments and tendons. Most FM patients say that they ache all over their body. CFS sufferers experience debilitating exhaustion, not reversed by rest, no matter how much they get. Some 576 new patients are diagnosed every week, although nearly all are initially misdiagnosed. These illnesses afflict more women than men, but are prevalent in people of all ages. There is no known means to avoid the illness. There is no known cause. There is no known cure.

Organizations like FM-CFS Canada are working with Canada’s leading medical associations and experts to advocate on behalf of those afflicted by this disease, as well as to develop educational materials to help patients learn to deal with all aspects of their illness and improve their quality of life.

I’m proud to know that FM-CFS Canada was founded in Ottawa in 1996 and continues their good work from there on behalf of Canadians, coast to coast to coast.

Especially, I wish to recognize the dedication of President Graham Mayes, Vice-President Ed Napke, M.D., and Kasia Majewski, a friend and constituent who inspired me to raise awareness for FM-CFS through this statement.

I encourage all members and all Ontarians to visit www.fm-cfs.ca for more information on this difficult condition.

1510

CITY OF PETERBOROUGH

Mr. Jeff Leal: I’ve stood in this House many times over the past five years and spoken about Peterborough and why it’s such a great place to live, work and raise a family. In the past, I spoke about the people who are the heart and soul of our community; I’ve spoken about their generosity and their bravery. I’ve spoken about our innovative businesses, our schools, colleges and universities. I’ve talked about our health care system, our beautiful new hospital and the success of our family health teams. I’ve spoken about the beauty of the Trent-Severn

waterway, Little Lake and the Otonabee River that flow through our city and the surrounding countryside. I've spoken about our sports teams and cultural events.

Well, I'm not the only one who has noticed what a great place Peterborough is. Others have taken into account our great weather, job market and real estate prices. They consider our low crime rate. They consider our transit system and our bike and walking trails that snake through our downtown core.

Based on the above items, Peterborough was ranked ninth out of 154 best places to live in Canada by Money-Sense magazine. I've always said that Peterborough was one of the best places to live in this country, and I was right.

LOISIRS DANS LES RÉGIONS DU NORD

M. Gilles Bisson: Ah, monsieur le Président, vous attendez avec anticipation le député de Timmins-Baie James, qui va faire sa déclaration. On sait que le printemps est arrivé parce qu'on commence à le voir à travers les régions du nord. Le monde commence à s'exciter. La glace est partie des lacs; la neige est partie. Ça veut dire que le monde se prépare, en effet, pour faire ce qu'on aime faire le mieux dans ce pays, dans cette province : être en contact avec ce qui se passe autour de nous autres, à nos chalets et dans les régions où on fait du camping.

On dit au monde qui se prépare de prendre toutes les précautions nécessaires pour s'assurer d'être sauvegardé quand ça vient à ce qu'on va faire une fois arrivé, et il faut s'assurer qu'à la fin de la journée, on respecte notre environnement en même temps. À tous ceux qui se préparent pour aller au chalet on souhaite un bon été, et assurez-vous que ça va être un bon temps pour tous.

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

Mr. David Zimmer: Ontarians know that education is a key builder of strong individuals, economies and communities. That's why it gives me great pleasure to recognize the McGuinty government's latest commitment to our children and their future. The recent announcement of proposed changes to the Education Act will make student achievement a pillar of our education system and ensure that students have all the skills to succeed.

School board leadership is important to student achievement. The proposed changes will:

First, clarify the mandate and duties of school boards to emphasize their responsibility for student achievement and strengthen their accountability to the public.

Second, clarify the roles of individual trustees, board chairs and directors of education. Providing clarity on their responsibilities will allow them to maintain their focus on the primary goal of student achievement and well-being.

Third, support good governance practices, including establishing audit committees and adopting a provincial code of conduct for trustees. This code will establish best

practices and give boards the tools they need to address improper behaviour.

This legislation underscores the McGuinty Liberals' commitment to the educational achievement of Ontario students. I applaud the government for this initiative. We will continue to work hard to ensure that education in this province is the best that it can be.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

CAPPING EXECUTIVE COMPENSATION ACT, 2009

LOI DE 2009 SUR LE PLAFONNEMENT DE LA RÉMUNÉRATION DES CADRES SUPÉRIEURS

Ms. Horwath moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill 180, An Act to cap executive compensation /
Projet de loi 180, Loi portant sur le plafonnement de la rémunération des cadres supérieurs.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member for a short statement.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The bill provides that any corporation that receives a grant or loan from Ontario shall not compensate any officer, director, executive or employee of the corporation in an amount greater than \$400,000. The bill requires that the prohibition be reflected in any contract signed between Ontario and a corporation regarding the grant or loan. If compensation greater than \$400,000 is given, Ontario may require repayment of the grant and may seize and dispose of any of the corporation's assets for the purpose of recovering the value of the grant or loan.

HIGHWAY TRAFFIC AMENDMENT ACT (AFTERMARKET BRAKE PAD STANDARDS), 2009

LOI DE 2009 MODIFIANT LE CODE DE LA ROUTE (NORMES RELATIVES AUX PLAQUETTES DE FREIN DE RECHANGE)

Mrs. Sandals moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill 181, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act with respect to aftermarket brake pad standards and specifications / Projet de loi 181, Loi modifiant le Code de la route en ce qui a trait aux normes et aux caractéristiques relatives aux plaquettes de frein de rechange.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member for a short statement.

Mrs. Liz Sandals: The bill amends the Highway Traffic Act to require that motor vehicles, other than

motorcycles, that are equipped with after-market brake pads be equipped with brake pads that meet the prescribed safety standards and specifications and do not contain asbestos.

STOP HUMAN TRAFFICKING DAY ACT, 2009

LOI DE 2009 SUR LA JOURNÉE POUR L'ÉLIMINATION DE LA TRAITE DES PERSONNES

Mr. Levac moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 182, An Act to proclaim Stop Human Trafficking Day / Projet de loi 182, Loi proclamant la Journée pour l'élimination de la traite des personnes.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member for a short statement.

Mr. Dave Levac: The bill, if passed, will proclaim May 1 in each year as Stop Human Trafficking Day. In a given year, there are 2.5 million victims of human trafficking worldwide and 1.2 million of them are children. Naomi Baker from Canada Fights Human Trafficking, and a local Brantfordian, estimates that there are between 600 and 800 victims of human trafficking annually in Ontario alone. Proclaiming May 1 as Stop Human Trafficking Day would ask us to give it consideration. Why May 1? That was the birth date of Dr. Emily Stowe, our first female doctor in Ontario, who was a suffragette as well.

MOTIONS

COMMITTEE SITTINGS

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I believe we have unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding the Standing Committee on Justice Policy.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Agreed? Agreed.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I move that the Standing Committee on Justice Policy be authorized to meet at 2:30 p.m. on Wednesday, May 13, 2009.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

PETITIONS

GREEN POWER GENERATION

Mr. Bill Murdoch: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the residents of Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound believe that Bill 150, Green Energy and Green Economy Act, 2009, is a new Liberal tax grab;

"Whereas a London Economics report showed that the increase in hydro bills could be at least \$1,200 per household per year plus 8% for the new HST;

"Whereas the Minister of Energy and Infrastructure has not stated where or how all the supposed new green jobs are going to be created;

"Whereas no scientific studies have been done to prove or disprove the health effects of living near wind turbines;

"Whereas the Liberals have failed to fully think out Bill 150 and how it will affect municipalities;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Liberal government should delay the implementation of Bill 150 and provide the citizens of Ontario with further research on the above-mentioned concerns."

I agree with this and sign it.

1520

WORKPLACE HARASSMENT

Ms. Andrea Horwath: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas workplace harassment (physical/psychological) and violence are linked to the mental and physical ill-health and safety of workers in Ontario; and

"Whereas harassment and violence need to be defined as violations of the Occupational Health and Safety Act so that it is dealt with as quickly and earnestly by employers as other health and safety issues; and

"Whereas employers will have a legal avenue and/or a legal obligation to deal with workplace harassment and violence in all its forms, including psychological harassment; and

"Whereas harassment poisons a workplace, taking many forms—verbal/physical abuse, sabotage, intimidation, bullying, sexism and racism, and should not be tolerated; and

"Whereas harassment in any form harms a target's physical and mental health, esteem and productivity, and contributes to trauma and stress on the job; and

"Whereas Bill 29 would make it the law to protect workers from workplace harassment by giving workers the right to refuse to work after harassment has occurred, require an investigation of allegations of workplace-related harassment and oblige employers to take steps to prevent further occurrences of workplace-related harassment;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to treat workplace harassment and violence as a serious health and safety issue by passing MPP Andrea Horwath's Bill 29, which would bring workplace harassment and violence under the scope of the Occupational Health and Safety Act."

I agree with this petition and send it to the table via page Myriam.

CEMETERIES

Mr. Jim Brownell: I have a petition that is signed by a number of constituents from Mississauga and Brampton, and it reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontario's cemeteries are an important part of our cultural heritage, and Ontario's inactive cemeteries are constantly at risk of closure and removal; and

"Ontario's cemeteries are an irreplaceable part of the province's cultural heritage;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"The government must pass Bill 149, the Inactive Cemeteries Protection Act, 2009, to prohibit the relocation of inactive cemeteries in the province of Ontario."

As I agree with this petition, I shall sign it and send it to the Clerks' table.

TAXATION

Mr. Jim Wilson: Roy and Jane Norton of Wasaga Beach were kind enough to send me this petition.

"Whereas the hard-working residents of Simcoe-Grey do not want a harmonized sales tax (HST) that will raise the cost of goods and services they use every day; and

"Whereas the 13% blended sales tax will cause everyone to pay more for, to name just a few, gasoline for their cars, heat, telephone, cable and Internet services for their homes, house sales over \$400,000, fast food under \$4, electricity, newspapers, magazines, stamps, theatre admissions, footwear less than \$30, home renovations, gym fees, audio books for the blind, funeral services, snowplowing, air conditioning repairs, commercial property rentals, real estate commissions, dry cleaning, car washes, manicures, Energy Star appliances, vet bills, bus fares, golf fees, arena ice rentals, moving vans, grass cutting, furnace repairs, domestic air travel, train fares, tobacco, bicycles and legal services; and

"Whereas the blended sales tax will affect everyone in the province: seniors, students, families and low-income Ontarians;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the McGuinty Liberal government not increase taxes for Ontario consumers."

I agree with this petition and I have signed it.

TAXATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: This is a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and it reads as follows:

"Whereas Ontario has lost 171,000 jobs since October and over 300,000 manufacturing and resource sector jobs since 2004; and

"Whereas many families are facing the threat of layoffs or reduced hours; and

"Whereas, rather than introducing a plan to sustain jobs and put Ontario's economy back on track, Dalton

McGuinty and his government chose to slap an 8% tax on everyday purchases while giving profitable corporations a \$2-billion income tax cut;

"Be it resolved that the undersigned call on the Legislature to cancel the scheduled implementation of sales tax harmonization."

I agree with this petition, will sign it and send it to the table by virtue of page RabeB.

CEMETERIES

Mr. Jim Brownell: I have another petition signed by Ontarians from Toronto and Waterloo, and it reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontario's cemeteries are an important part of our cultural heritage, and Ontario's inactive cemeteries are constantly at risk of closure and removal; and

"Ontario's cemeteries are an irreplaceable part of the province's cultural heritage;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"The government must pass Bill 149, the Inactive Cemeteries Protection Act, 2009, to prohibit the relocation of inactive cemeteries in the province of Ontario."

As I agree with the petition, I shall sign it and send it to the Clerks' table.

PENSION PLANS

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I have a petition here signed by a great number of residents in the province of Ontario. It's to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas Ontarians are currently denied full discretionary access to their locked-in retirement accounts; and

"Whereas the monies within these locked-in accounts have already been earned as deferred salary, i.e., they are not government handouts or bailouts; and

"Whereas Ontario pensioners have already demonstrated throughout life that they are quite capable of prudent financial management, given that they have raised families, bought and sold homes and automobiles, managed investments, paid their taxes, operated businesses, among other successes; and

"Whereas similar legislation passed in Saskatchewan in 2002 has been successful and has demonstrated the wisdom and prudence of retirees; and

"Whereas a quick and immediate unlocking of pension funds would act as a significant and timely stimulus to the economy during the current recession;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to support into law the private member's bill recently tabled by Mr. Ted Chudleigh, MPP Halton, allowing all Ontario pensioners, at age 55, full discretionary access to all monies accrued within their locked-in retirement accounts."

I thank you very much for allowing me to present this on Mr. Chudleigh's behalf.

CHILD PROTECTION

Mr. Paul Miller: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Whereas Ontario is one of the few provinces that does not have independent oversight of child welfare administration; and

"Whereas eight provinces now have independent oversight of child welfare issues, including child protection; and

"Whereas all provincial Ombudsmen first identified child protection as a priority issue in 1986 and still Ontario does not allow the Ombudsman to investigate people's complaints about children's aid societies' decisions; and

"Whereas people wronged by CAS decisions concerning placement, access, custody or care are not allowed to appeal those decisions to the Ontario Ombudsman's office;

"Therefore, be it resolved that we support the Ombudsman having the power to probe decisions and investigate complaints concerning the province's children's aid societies."

I agree with this petition and affix my name to it, and Cameron will bring it forward.

TOM LONGBOAT

Mr. Mike Colle: I have a petition here to recognize June 4 as Tom Longboat Day in Ontario.

"Whereas Tom Longboat, a proud son of the Onondaga Nation, was one of the most internationally celebrated athletes in Canadian history; and

"Whereas Tom Longboat was voted as Canada's number one athlete of the 20th century by Maclean's magazine for his record-breaking marathon and long-distance triumphs against the world's best; and

"Whereas Tom Longboat fought for his country in World War I and was wounded twice during his tour of duty; and

"Whereas Tom Longboat is a proud symbol of the outstanding achievements and contributions of Canada's aboriginal people;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to recognize June 4"—that's not too far off—"as Tom Longboat Day in Ontario."

I support Tom Longboat, as does the Minister of Northern Development and Mines, and we'll all support this and sign the petition.

TAXATION

Mr. Bill Murdoch: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas residents of Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound do not want a provincial harmonized sales tax that will raise the cost of goods and services they use every day; and

"Whereas the 13% blended sales tax will cause everyone to pay more for gasoline for their cars, heat, telephone, cable and Internet services for their homes, and will be applied to house sales over \$400,000; and

"Whereas the 13% blended sales tax will cause everyone to pay more for meals under \$4, haircuts, funeral services, gym memberships, newspapers, and lawyer and accountant fees; and

"Whereas the blended sales tax grab will affect everyone in the province: seniors, students, families and low-income Ontarians;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the McGuinty Liberal government not increase taxes for Ontario consumers."

I've signed this.

CHILD PROTECTION

Mr. Gilles Bisson: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Whereas Ontario is one of the few provinces that does not have independent oversight of child welfare administration; and

"Whereas eight provinces now have independent oversight of child welfare issues, including child protection; and

"Whereas all provincial Ombudsmen first identified child protection as a priority issue in 1986 and still Ontario does not allow the Ombudsman to investigate people's complaints about children's aid societies' decisions; and

"Whereas people wronged by CAS decisions concerning placement, access, custody or care are not allowed to appeal those decisions to the Ontario Ombudsman's office;

"Therefore, be it resolved that we support the Ombudsman having the power to probe decisions and investigate complaints concerning the province's children's aid societies."

It's signed by many people from the Hamilton area.

1530

SCHOOL FACILITIES

Mr. Phil McNeely: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas St. Matthew Catholic High School is currently operating at 137% capacity and has been overcrowded for many years; and

"Whereas the Ottawa Catholic school board's capital plan identifies building an addition to St. Matthew Catholic High School as necessary (contingent on provincial grants) and planned for 2008; and

"Whereas the province of Ontario does not currently have a model to fund capital additions where school boards are not in debt and where these schools are in

established communities and not part of the board's educational development charges bylaw;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To immediately transfer to the Ottawa Catholic school board the necessary funds to design and build the planned addition to St. Matthew ... High School in Orléans."

I will be signing—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Petitions.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. John O'Toole: It's a pleasure to present the petition that reads as follows:

"Whereas the municipality of Clarington passed resolution C-049-09 in support of Lakeridge Health Bowmanville; and

"Whereas area doctors, hospital staff and citizens have raised concerns that Bowmanville's hospital could turn into little more than a site to stabilize and transfer patients for treatment outside the municipality; and

"Whereas Clarington is a growing community of over 80,000; and

"Whereas we support the continuation of ... Lakeridge Bowmanville ... through access to on-site services, including emergency room, internal medicine and general surgery;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, request that the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and the McGuinty government take" all and "necessary actions to fund our hospitals equally and fairly. And furthermore, we request that the clinical services plan of the Central East Local Health Integration Network address the need for the Bowmanville hospital to continue to offer a complete range of services appropriate for the growing community" in the municipality of Clarington.

I am happy to present this to Nicola on one of her last days here at Queen's Park.

FIREARMS CONTROL

Mr. Mike Colle: I have a petition here against drive-by shootings.

"Whereas there are a growing number of drive-by shootings and gun crimes in our communities;

"Whereas only police officers, military personnel and lawfully licensed persons" should be "allowed to possess handguns;

"Whereas a growing number of illegal handguns are transported, smuggled and being found in cars driven in our communities;

"Whereas impounding cars and suspending driver's licences of persons possessing illegal guns on the spot by the police will make our communities safer;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to pass Bill 56, a bill ... entitled the Unlawful Firearms in Vehicles Act, 2008, into law so

that we can reduce the number of drive-by shootings and gun crimes in our communities."

I support this petition and I affix my name to it.

TUITION

Mr. Jim Wilson: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas undergraduate tuition fees in Ontario have increased by 195% since 1990 and are the third-highest in all of the provinces in Canada; and

"Whereas average student debt in Ontario has skyrocketed by 250% in the past 15 years to over \$25,000 for four years of study; and

"Whereas international students pay three to four times more for the same education, and domestic students in professional programs such as law and medicine pay as much as \$20,000 per year; and

"Whereas 70% of new jobs require post-secondary education, and fees reduce the opportunity for many low- and middle-income families while magnifying barriers for aboriginal, rural, racialized and other marginalized students; and

"Whereas Ontario currently provides the lowest per capita funding for post-secondary education in Canada, while many countries fully fund higher education and charge little or no fees for college or university; and

"Whereas public opinion polls show that nearly three quarters of Ontarians think the government's Reaching Higher framework for tuition fee increases of 20% to 36% over four years is unfair;

"Therefore, we, the undersigned, support the Canadian Federation of Students' call to immediately drop tuition fees to 2004 levels and petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to introduce a new framework that:

"Reduces tuition and ancillary fees annually for students.

"Converts a portion of every student loan into a grant.

"Increases per student funding above the national average."

I've signed that petition.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The time provided for petitions has expired.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GREEN ENERGY AND GREEN ECONOMY ACT, 2009

LOI DE 2009 SUR L'ÉNERGIE VERTE ET L'ÉCONOMIE VERTE

Resuming the debate adjourned on May 11, 2009, on the motion for third reading of Bill 150, An Act to enact the Green Energy Act, 2009 and to build a green economy, to repeal the Energy Conservation Leadership Act, 2006 and the Energy Efficiency Act and to amend other statutes / Projet de loi 150, Loi édictant la Loi de

2009 sur l'énergie verte et visant à développer une économie verte, abrogeant la Loi de 2006 sur le leadership en matière de conservation de l'énergie et la Loi sur le rendement énergétique et modifiant d'autres lois.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I'm pleased to join in the debate. I just want to say up front that this is another one of these bills that we see from the government where the title of the bill is well-intentioned, and they're trying to do, I think, what's right, generally. I know that if we were the government and our Minister of the Environment was Mr. Tabuns and our leader was the Premier, we would be doing something probably a little bit more aggressive than what we're seeing in this legislation.

What's good about this bill is the title. I like the title; the title is a really good one. It reads something like the Green Energy Act, which makes me feel warm and fuzzy inside and makes me feel that the government finally is going to do something—moving our reliance from nuclear to renewables and to conservation. But as I look at this bill in some detail, it goes somewhat in that direction, but it's not very aggressive in being able to meet any of the goals and targets that should be set in a bill such as this, as far as where we want to be in the end. So I'll support it, I'll vote for the bill—what the heck. I did so at second reading. It doesn't take us a step back, but I don't think it brings us any real step forward.

Let me tell you what I think fundamentally we need to do when it comes to the bill. I am a firm believer that governments have got to set targets and have got to set goals. I am a firm believer that government should be setting targets and goals when it comes to what they want to achieve with an initiative such as this. I think we all agree that at the end of the day, Ontario has got to do what needs to be done to make sure that we're able to generate the amount of electricity needed for homes and industries and for various uses well into the future. I think that nobody in this House would argue that we need to get there. There's some discussion about how much electricity we think we will need based on how much conservation we do, and I think that's a fair debate. But clearly, what this bill is lacking is any goal to get where it is that we want to go.

For example, I would argue that we really want to move in the direction of making sure that we are better on the conservation side. We know, for example, that if you're able to save one megawatt by way of conservation, it's a megawatt that you don't have to generate. It stands to reason that if we invest heavily on the conservation side, we will be able to save money when it comes to—

Interjection.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I've got to put my glasses on to read that one. I will read this as we speak. "I believe we have unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding the Standing Committee on Justice Policy." I think we did that already, didn't we? Kevin, we

did this already. Okay, somebody go and check, please. That was already done.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): We're all set to go? We're good to go?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: The question we have on the floor—there's no unanimous consent request yet. I'm asking my assistant to double-check, because I'm pretty sure that in fact this was done earlier. I will have him confer with the House leader.

As I was saying, the issue is that the government needs to, I believe, set targets and goals of where it is that it wants to get to. I would argue—

Interjection.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Can I ask for a very quick recess of two seconds, Mr. Speaker? If somebody can just give me two seconds.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Keep standing and you have the floor.

Interjection.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: This was already done. That's what I'm trying to tell people. I'm in the middle of a debate and they're trying to get me move to a unanimous consent motion that was already moved sometime earlier this afternoon.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Thank you.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: So I get what was going on in the House here. Now, let me get back to my debate. Thank you.

As I was saying, I believe that the government is trying to do the right thing by way of the Green Energy Act, but I would argue that there are no goals and targets set to be able to get there.

First of all, what kind of target should we be setting? I said earlier that I believe, and I think most members in this House understand, that if we're able to save energy as far as consumption by way of being more aggressive on the conservation side, that is energy that we don't need to produce on the generation side. So it only stands to reason that an investment on the conservation side is not only good when it comes to the environment, because it means that we don't need to burn more coal, we don't need to burn more gas, run a nuclear plant or drop more water over the dam to generate electricity. You can do that by being heavier on conservation.

For example, one of the things that we're being told over and over again by many people who know a fair amount about energy is that there is a number of things that the government could have done in this bill, I think, to make it stronger. One is amendments to the building code. There's a whole raft of things that can be done in our building code that would say that in the future, whenever you apply for a building permit to build a new building, be it residential, be it industrial, be it commercial, there are things we need to do when it comes to heat, lighting, insulation and various ways of saving energy. If we were to do that in itself, just change the building code for buildings going into the future, we know there would be an offset saving over the longer

term for the person as far as the amount of energy used. But for us as a province, it means we need to generate far less energy as far as electricity, and that's an offsetting saving for both the province and consumers of electricity in Ontario: You don't need to pay for the large generation plants that otherwise would need to be built.

1540

So where are the building code amendments that should have been part of this bill? The government doesn't indicate either by way of debate, in this bill or in press conferences they could have had that they're prepared to make the kinds of changes that need to be made to the building code. We know there is new technology available in the construction trades that can do a lot in order to save us all kinds of energy consumption by way of better insulation, better doors and better heating systems. We're not doing as much as I believe we need to do in order to move on the conservation side.

Conversely, the government says, "Oh, we have an answer," and that's why I think they're doing the bill. "We're going to invest on the nuclear side." So this government made the decision, but they're going through the process of approving additional nuclear capacity when it comes to generation in this province, and they'll be making an announcement later this spring, in June, or maybe early July. They'll be deciding which way they're going to go, with which technology. Are they going to use Candu or are they going to use others?

I think they're missing the point. I don't think you need any of them. If you're smart and you do work on the conservation side, you don't have to spend the billions of dollars it's going to cost us to invest on the nuclear side. I think you've got to make sure the fleet that's there is running well, that it's efficient and that it generates to the efficiency that it should. That means, yes, we need to make investments in the existing nuclear fleet. But when it comes to additional capacity in the nuclear fleet, I really think we're making a very bad decision, not just from the perspective of people's fears and insecurity around nuclear generators, the environment or whatever it might be, because people have different reasons for opposing them, but my primary concern is that of cost. I believe that at the end of the day it would be far more efficient and practical for Ontario to invest heavily on the conservation and alternative generation sides, as far as wind and others, and we would get a bigger payback for Ontario in a number of ways.

We would create lots of jobs. Imagine the work we could get in our construction trades if we were much more aggressive on the development of various ways of generating power, such as solar, wind and others that are barely tapped into. Yes, the government has made some steps on the wind side. We see some of those wind farms around Ontario. But I think there's far more that we can do. We could, for example, have a made-in-Ontario policy where we say that 60% of the wind turbine that is being built has to be manufactured in Ontario. That would give our factories in and around Ontario the opportunity to do the engineering, the R&D, the manu-

facturing, the construction and the maintenance of those particular facilities and would add to the amount of employment available to people in Ontario. But it would also allow us, as a province, to become much cleaner in the way we produce our electricity. I think the government could do that and it would be an offset, as far as net economic benefit, to the province of Ontario.

We could decide to invest heavily on the conservation side. I think if consumers, be they homeowners, small business owners or the large industrial plant, would have—first of all, they do have an incentive now by way of cheaper energy prices if you're able to better insulate and use technologies to lower your demand for electricity, natural gas, diesel or heating oil. But part of the problem is that often these individuals don't have the money to invest to build and put in place the new conservation measures they would like to put together.

For example, at the cottage that my brother and I own up in Kamiskotia, we looked at whether it would make some sense to go to a combination wind-solar system as a backup generating system to supplement our electricity needs and then sell back to the grid whatever excess electricity we're not using if we're not there. We thought that would be a good way to save a little bit of money as far as our overall hydro bill—because we only have electricity there—and at the same time be able to do our bit for the environment. Well, part of the problem is that the technology is fairly expensive. If I were to go out and buy a wind generator along with some backup solar—because the combination of the two, from my reading, would be the way to go as it's not always windy. When it is windy, you get electricity from your generator; it may not be windy when it's sunny, so you get more electricity from the solar panel. The point is, to invest in that is fairly expensive. By the time you do something that's worthwhile, you're investing upwards of \$15,000, and the \$15,000, as far as payback, is pretty darn slow because the amount of money that you would make on the resale of electricity to the grid and the amount of hydro that you would save by way of not having to buy from the grid but take from your own generating system would be not sufficient to have a payback quicker than 15 years.

Clearly, the government needs to have some sort of incentive to say to individual homeowners, "Here's some way of getting you interested in making the investments." There are some minimal programs that out there. You know of some of them, Speaker. I'm sure people have gone to your constituency office to ask about these particular programs. The federal government has an interesting program on being able to get into producing electricity by way of wind turbines in your residence, but the problem is, they're pretty small. You need to find some kind of way to make it so that the consumer has an incentive to do this.

If you can design a program of some type that allows a consumer to, say, in a period of six to eight years, pay back their investment when it comes to investing in their own supplemental electricity needs, I think people would decide to do that. They'd say, "In six to eight years, I get

the payback. My maintenance costs tacked up on top of that: I'll start to make a net gain after six or eight years. That makes some sense." People would be willing to make that investment.

If they did so, it would mean two or three things. One, every kilowatt saved by way of being able to generate your own means that the public utility doesn't have to generate those extra kilowatts, which means we don't need to expand our nuclear fleet the way that we're doing it now. It gives the construction trades a lot of work because not everybody has the wherewithal to install this type of equipment on their home or small business or wherever it might be, readily. Normally, you would have to hire some sort of business to do that, and it's not a job that's exportable. The installation of these types of generators has to be done on-site. It's not like something that could be outsourced to some other country around the world.

More importantly, if you had a buy-Ontario provision within that particular scheme, it would allow our universities, our industries, to invest in research and development so that eventually they're able to make those investments that would allow Ontario to produce these products right here. We would be able to spur a whole industry that would not only just have a market here in Ontario but be able to build the expertise and the experience necessary to market these technologies around the world. You would be, in effect, creating a domestic market that would allow our own domestic industry to do some of the work that needs to be done around this, so that we are able to position ourselves as a geographic region that is into these types of technologies by way of manufacturing and resale. I think it would be a net benefit for us here in the province of Ontario.

Are those provisions, both the buy-Ontario and the incentives that are necessary to allow consumers to buy these type of technologies, in this bill? No, they are not. That's why I was saying at the beginning that we needed to have some sort of target or some sort of goal within this bill, so that government is able to aim to get to a particular point as far as where it wants to get to.

For example, we know that in Germany they are leading the world when it comes to solar power generation. What they've done is they've involved the consumers and the people who own houses in a way that has not been done anywhere in the world. What they did is they created some incentive programs in order to allow German homeowners to invest in solar and wind power in their own homes, and they set a goal. They said that within so many years they want to build—I think it was something like 50,000 solar panels within a period of two and a half years or something like that; I can't remember the exact numbers. The point is, there was a goal that was set by the German government. What that did was, it created a demand. It created a goal, first of all, so that the government had to create a mechanism and programs to allow people to afford to buy this technology, and it gave an ability for their German industry to come up with a response of: "What needs to be designed? How does it

need to be built? How can we keep the cost down?" As they built and they got better at it, they became the leaders, and now they're exporting this technology around the world.

I met with a German company here at Queen's Park about a month ago. They're in the process of installing a solar farm on Dalton Road in the city of Timmins. Who would have thought, 10 years ago, that somebody would be interested in developing solar energy in a community like Timmins?

It's possible. Why? Because they had developed the technology to be able to do this because of the incentive programs that the German government had put in place, allowing them to develop the technology, and now they're out there exporting the technology around the world.

When I met with them, they said, "Listen, we're more than prepared to set up shop here and produce these panels in Ontario and to do the R&D to develop this technology even further, but there are not the types of programs here in Ontario to allow us to do that in a real way." That's why I say the government should have set targets and goals in the legislation that would have given the ability to get to where they needed to get to.

1550

So, yeah, the bill is not a bad bill in the sense that it's got a great title; it talks about green energy. I think all of us are environmentalists in one way or another, and we want to do what's right by the environment, but clearly the title of the bill is much stronger than what's in the details of the bill.

Again, I just very quickly want to say that one of the things we could have done, and it wasn't done, as I said at the beginning, was the whole issue of the building code. Just changing the building code so that new standards are set when it comes to how we build houses, factories and retail space in the province of Ontario would go a long way in saving the need to generate electricity and burn fossil fuels to heat and light our homes.

All it would take is to sit down and to take a look at the building code with people out there who are fairly knowledgeable and will give us some good advice about what targets we set within our building code so that we can do this in a way that makes some sense and doesn't raise the price of construction beyond the roof—pardon the pun—but at the same time, gives us an ability to save energy in the longer run.

Like most homeowners, I'm always looking for a way to save a buck, and if I was building a brand new house and I had a requirement of what it is that I needed to build, I'd build it to the building code, and that, at the end of the day, would not only be good for the consumer but would also be good for us as far as the need to generate electricity.

So it's a bill that has a worthy title, a bill that definitely tries to go in the right direction, but a bill that I think doesn't go to the degree that it needs to. I will support the bill because I don't see it as a negative thing. It's not as if they're trying to bring us back. I think the

government is trying to say, on the one hand, we're going to go out and generate more electricity by way of nuclear plants—the government needed to have something to counterbalance their insatiable appetite to build new nuclear plants, so they needed to have a bill out there that they can point to, and that's what this bill is all about.

It's one of those things that the government decided to do that, at the end of the day, provides them cover to say that they really do take the environment seriously, but I think that anybody who reads this bill in any detail will see that it doesn't do even a third of what needs to be done to make Ontario much more sustainable when it comes to the generation of electricity and to put us in a position that we need to be in as an Ontario economy.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Charles Sousa: I'm pleased to debate Bill 150. What really stands out for me is how this bill speaks to increased renewable energy and conservation.

Ontario and my community of Mississauga South in particular are growing. More people means more homes and businesses, which in turn means an increased demand for electricity. That's why it's more important than ever for us to think about the way we use electricity, especially during peak hours. We need to manage peak demand more effectively, because that's when we've relied most on our dirty coal plants.

As a lifelong resident of south Mississauga, I'm a big supporter of getting Ontario off coal, and I'm proud of our commitment to do just that. I grew up next to the Lakeview coal plant. My community celebrated when those stacks came down, and we welcomed the minister's announcement that the site would never again be used for power generation. Protecting our waterfront and revitalizing our lakeside community is the right thing to do.

But the need for reliable power continues to exist, and so the OPA is currently sourcing natural gas power plants to meet it. While gas is a cleaner fuel and a big improvement over coal, it still produces emissions like CO₂, particulate matter and VOCs. This is significant, especially for my community, because we're already in a stressed airshed.

I've lived in Mississauga all my life. Clarkson is my home; it's where I'm raising my kids. So I share the same concerns as many in my community about the cumulative effect of further emissions into our sensitive airshed. Like them, I, too, don't want another power plant or any other large emitter in our community. That's why this bill is so important. By promoting conservation and reducing electricity demand, especially during peak hours, we can reduce our reliance on fossil fuel plants. This bill is an important step forward for our environment and for our health.

I'm pleased to support this bill, and I congratulate the minister on presenting it. I look forward to all of my colleagues on both sides of the House standing up in support of energy conservation and a cleaner environment for Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for Durham.

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm responding to the member from Timmins—James Bay, who I think has got it right: that there's more fanfare than content in that bill.

But I really want to get to the member from Mississauga South—excellent speech. I'm glad for the way you read it; it was so clear. The Lakeview coal plant was closed—it should be on the record—by Minister Wilson and Minister Elizabeth Witmer, and thank you for thanking them. I'll pass it on.

Interjections.

Mr. John O'Toole: Yes, it's true. They're barracking. *Interjections.*

Mr. John O'Toole: Listen up. The truth often becomes provocative; no question about it.

I would also say that the member from Mississauga South is dealing with an issue in his riding about the peaking gas plant that's going to go ahead in Clarkson. I know that Hazel McCallion is totally opposed to it. Is he with the mayor or not?

Bill 150—they've got it so wrong that the speech they gave him doesn't even address what his constituents are interested in. I think it's unconscionable for the member to stand and not even acknowledge the work of the member from Timmins—James Bay and the remarks he made.

Fortunately, I will have an opportunity this afternoon to dispel some of the myths surrounding this Green Energy Act.

People of Ontario, please understand. When your energy bill goes up by \$1,200 to \$2,000 a year, be forewarned and forearmed that the member from Mississauga South and, I dare say, all the members of the Liberal Party are in favour of a bill that raises your taxes and raises the cost of energy.

The member from Timmins—James Bay knows full well that the resources of the province take a lot of energy, and the economy right now is such that they should be focusing on trying to make energy more affordable, more accessible, but no; they're not. They're introducing what they call green energy—all of it, and there's a good article this morning in the National Post that's worth reading.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for Hamilton East—Stoney Creek.

Mr. Paul Miller: I always get told to go back in my seat if I'm making comments. Do you know anybody here like that?

Anyway, I'd just like to say that the member from Timmins—James Bay hit a lot of important points. This bill, frankly, is moving in the right direction. Does it go far enough? No. Are there suggestions from this side of the House that could have been listened to that may have been utilized? Yes. Sometimes, do ideas that come from this side of the House get taken, turned around and used over there? Yes, on a regular basis. I'm beginning to learn that. You come out with some good suggestions, it dies in committee and, all of a sudden, it resurfaces a few months later and it comes from a different party. It's very interesting how that works.

Getting back to the points that the member from Timmins–James Bay made, he's correct that we can utilize—there are a lot of buildings in cities and in the country that don't meet the standards required for energy efficiency. If we were to sink a lot of money, which would create a lot of jobs, into retrofitting buildings in cities and doing all these things instead of focusing completely on windmills, solar and nuclear, we could probably save anywhere up to 25% to 30% of our energy consumption by retrofitting buildings that are presently not up to standard.

Yes, he hits a real point when he says, "Let's change the building code so they meet these standards on everything when we build new structures." That would be excellent.

In reference to the other members, I'll try to stick to the member's comments rather than getting off on a speech or something that's not related.

Once again, I'd like to thank the member from Timmins–James Bay for his submission.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Phil McNeely: I want to thank the member for Timmins–James Bay for praise generally for Bill 150, the Green Energy Act.

Conservation is energy number one, and our bill and our party are certainly behind that. Looking at conservation a little more broadly, the Green Energy Act recognizes it's equally as important as supporting more renewable sources of generation. That's part of the bill, that culture of conservation. Minister Smitherman has stressed that giving Ontarians the tools to understand and reduce their electricity use is good, not only for the environment but also for our wallets. If the Green Energy Act becomes law, about \$900 million will be spent on conservation strategies across all sectors over the next three years, so conservation is the focus of our bill. We know that; conservation is energy number one.

1600

The second issue that you brought up in a negative way, I thought, was that the building code should be changed. Of course. If passed, Bill 150 would allow amendments to the building code that would establish energy conservation as a purpose of the code. This is a very important aspect of it. We should be building our homes to higher standards because we're going to have those high energy costs in the future at some time. So that is definitely one of the major thrusts of our bill, to change the building code.

Your third objection was on domestic content. We're having discussions on domestic content provisions for wind energy and solar projects. These provisions, in turn, would support jobs in Ontario in manufacturing, design, engineering and other related industries. From the point of view of incentives to get the renewables going, the feed-in tariffs are going to be interesting for people who wish to do that. It's going to be a new, proactive way of trying to get more renewables in, and this bill will do that.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for Timmins–James Bay, you have two minutes to respond.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I want to thank members for taking the time to comment on my thoughts with regard to this bill. I just remind people of one of the points that was made, that this bill is going to allow us to amend the building code. You didn't need to have this bill to amend the building code. That can be done at any time by way of the government's will to do so, so you didn't need this bill to do that, but I understand the comments.

I want to pick up on a point that was made by Mr. Miller, the member from Hamilton East, I believe. He's right. One of the things that I should have said, and I meant to say, and it gives me an opportunity to wrap up, is, who's the largest electricity consumer in the province of Ontario? It's us. It's the broader public service. Our hospitals, our schools, our government buildings, our town halls: All of those buildings that are paid for by the taxpayer are the buildings that, because of their numbers, because of the sheer amount of square footage that we have for offices and hospitals and classrooms, make us the largest consumer of electricity in the province of Ontario and the largest consumer of various types of fossil fuels when it comes to heating those buildings. If we as a government had our own energy retrofit program which said, "At the very least we're not going to jump on the private sector or individual homeowners to spend money they don't have, but we as a province are going to be aggressive about how we're able to save money in our own buildings"—and that's everything from flicking off the lights when you leave a room to investing in technology that allows you to utilize technology to be able to cycle equipment on and off when necessary. Do we need to keep the temperature in an office building that hot in the evenings or on weekends? You can bring it down by four or five degrees and save a little bit of energy. By way of investing in insulation, better windows, better heating systems and lighting systems, you can save a lot of electricity. We're told that if the government was aggressive with its own buildings, we could probably save about 20% of the need for generation today, so we should practise and put our money where our mouth is and maybe start in our own backyard.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mr. Jim Wilson: It's my pleasure to speak to the Green Energy Act today and to maybe add some new components to the debate we've had thus far with respect to this legislation.

As one of the longer-serving energy ministers in Ontario history, I have a keen interest in the subject matter at hand. Under Progressive Conservative leadership we set the stage in 1998 for an expanded, flexible, green, nimble and commercial energy sector in Ontario. We broke up the monolithic Ontario Hydro and invited entrepreneurs to invest and compete in Ontario's electricity system. It was that restructuring, bold for its time, which set the stage for a financially secure and diverse energy

mix, including green energy renewables, and allowed the current government to even contemplate the things that they are talking about when they promote this bill, things like allowing homeowners to generate power on their rooftops and inject it back into the grid. We did that in 1998. That would not have been possible without that legislation. It began to open the grid to fair and open access; part of that Energy Competition Act allowed that to happen. Things like having the Ontario Energy Board participate in encouraging demand response and conservation through local distribution company licensing conditions would not have been possible had we Progressive Conservatives not made electricity a regulated utility in our Ontario Energy Board Act, 1998. Things like promoting wind power by making it possible to earn an economic return from wind no matter when the wind is blowing would not have been possible had we Progressive Conservatives not passed the Electricity Act of 1998. We created the independent system operator and adopted market rules that recognized non-dispatchable forms of electricity.

So I want to commend my successor, the current Minister of Energy, for following our lead in wanting to make it easier for private power plant developers to build projects in Ontario. And I, somewhat sarcastically, commend the current government for trying to welcome private sector investors to Ontario, for signalling, as the Progressive Conservatives were the first to do, that Ontario is open for business. But my praise stops there.

When we as a Progressive Conservative government and I as energy minister made those bold changes to finally open Ontario's energy sector for business after 100 years of monopolization, we had a purpose in doing so. We didn't just do it because it sounded good or because it polled well. Unlike the present Liberal government, we did it because we had a reason, a principle, a goal, a goal that we wanted to accomplish. In fact, we had three main purposes for what we did.

Our first main purpose was we wanted to make private investors take on the risk of cost overruns and scheduling delays, taking these risks off the back of the Ontario taxpayer and leaving the potential business downside for those who stood to gain from the potential business upside. We believed that eliminating taxpayer risk and shifting that risk to private sector players who were willing to take it on was good for Ontarians. I only point to Darlington and who got stuck with the over-cost there.

Two, our purpose was that we wanted to create a competitive market where only the most efficient and cost-effective power plants would be built, where only the lowest-priced offers would be accepted, ultimately driving power prices down through competition—hardly what we're doing under this act.

And three, we wanted to give consumers a choice. We wanted to let the people of Ontario, people who live in a free and democratic market society, make choices as to what kind of power they wanted to use, what risk tolerance they wanted to assume, what price levels they wanted to pay and how much money they wanted to save through conservation.

But this McGuinty government has no purpose. Their only purpose is for political expediency. A Green Energy Act sounds like it will score points, sounds like it will be popular regardless of what it says inside the bill. Other than scoring political points in the polls, they can't tell you what their real purpose is in doing this act. They've managed to take the same action as we did, making it easier for private sector developers to invest in Ontario, and use that to completely undermine the original purpose for doing just that.

Let's review again the purpose for welcoming private investment into Ontario's electricity market: One, you want to shift risk from the Ontario taxpayer to the private sector. After all, they're the ones that stand to gain the profits if they do it right, so they should take the risk. Under this Green Energy Act, private investors aren't taking on any risk. All of the risks and costs are being handed back to Ontario taxpayers, just like the old Ontario Hydro monopoly days. Private developers are guaranteed their rates and revenues no matter what they build, where they build it, or when they operate it. Ontarians, through the Ontario Power Authority and the Ontario Energy Board, are required to pay the tab. Nobody will build anything now in the province unless they get what the government is offering, which is 20-year guaranteed contracts at 20-year guaranteed prices, all on the backs of the people of Ontario. Again, the people of Ontario, the ratepayers and taxpayers, take all the risks and the private companies get guaranteed prices for guaranteed periods of time, regardless of what happens in the economy or what happens to technology.

I ask, who takes on the risk that energy use will decline through conservation and we'll end up over 20 years with more power supply than we need? Or, as is happening now with the loss of 300,000 manufacturing jobs, who takes on this risk if lower power levels are needed, which they are now? They're down some 20% since the government started to talk about this Green Energy Act, and yet the government has agreed to buy power for the next 20 years at fixed prices regardless of whether we need it or not.

I ask, who takes on the risk that over the next 20 years technology will improve and we'll be stuck using outdated power plants? Ontarians take on that risk, because this government has agreed to use technology for the next 20 years, no matter what happens in the world of science. Who takes on the risk of fluctuating energy prices that may actually come down over the next 20 years, just as oil prices have dropped 50% this year? Ontarians take on that risk, because this government has agreed to pay a fixed price for the next 20 years, regardless of world events and markets—unheard of. It's outright bribery to the private sector so that they'll come in and build some plants, so the government can say they've brought green energy to Ontario. But at what price?

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Ontarians don't want that risk, and traditionally they've asked governments to get out of these risky businesses, and backing risky businesses, if the private sector

is willing to take on that risk. That was the very reason we broke up the old Ontario Hydro in 1998. Ontario Hydro had accumulated \$38 billion in debt; \$21 billion of that was dumped onto taxpayers, who continue to pay for it to this day through the debt retirement charge on their monthly hydro bill.

Our Progressive Conservative government said, "Never again." We invited private power companies to try to earn a profit, but in exchange they had to assume all of the risk. The Liberals are now welcoming private sector companies to Ontario to earn a profit without any risk. So Premier McGuinty has brought back all of the downside from the old Ontario Hydro days, without any of the upside.

Our second purpose for welcoming the private sector into the electricity sector was to foster competition, to ensure the best product for the lowest price. But this Green Energy Act eliminates the last remnants of a competitive marketplace. In that system, the system that I set up as energy minister in 1998, private developers were welcome to come to Ontario to compete for business. If they could build a competitive plant, in a competitive location, with competitive electricity levels, at a competitive cost, then they would probably do very well, as would Ontario consumers.

But under the Green Energy Act, they are now welcoming private developers to build anything, anywhere, any time, at any price. It doesn't matter if your plant has 100% efficiency or 10% efficiency. We'll pay for it—the taxpayers will pay for it.

It doesn't matter if you want to build your plant in a location where the power is needed and can be used, or thousands of kilometres away from where it's needed. We'll pay for it; hence the billions of dollars in new transmission lines being proposed.

It doesn't matter if you build it near a transmission line that has the capacity to accept your power, or near a line that is full and needs, for example, a \$100-million upgrade in order to accommodate you. We, the taxpayers and ratepayers, will pay for it.

It doesn't matter if you generate electricity in the middle of the day, when it's needed, as is not the case with some of these new technologies, or if you generate that electricity in the middle of the night, when it's useless. We'll pay for it, because again, we're giving you a guaranteed price over a guaranteed period of time, whether we need your power or not.

And by the way, we're going to pay everyone the same price. We don't want to give you any reason to try to build a better plant, to try to be more efficient, to do any research and development, to find a way to make power cleaner or cheaper. We don't want to give you any reason to try to drive the price down. No, we're actually going to lock the whole province in at a higher rate than what we're currently paying.

Competition was meant to drive costs down over time, as it has done with phone service, long distance service and Internet service. But because this Liberal government has decided to set prices, it means that the price can only go up.

Our third purpose for welcoming the private sector into the electricity market was to create consumer choice. But under the Green Energy Act, consumer choice has been replaced by—I'll call it George's choice. George Smitherman, the Minister of Energy, doesn't think Ontarians can be trusted to manage their own hydro bills.

Under the Progressive Conservative government's system of consumer choice, companies like Bullfrog Power arose. We'd never heard of them before, but under our Energy Competition Act, they arose, giving consumers the choice to buy 100% green power if they wanted to. And thousands of homeowners and businesses made that choice. For the first time in 100 years, they were allowed to make that choice, and they did. But no more; Mr. Smitherman, the Minister of Energy, George, will now tell everyone exactly how much green power they'll use, how much nuclear power and how much coal power.

Our Progressive Conservative government trusted each Ontarian to be able to determine how much price volatility and risk they were prepared to handle. After all, they do this in their everyday lives and their everyday financial decisions.

Just like a mortgage, we let people choose whether they wanted to opt for the certainty of a fixed rate or go with the lower cost of a variable rate. No more; the Minister of Energy, George, has now decided that everyone wants a fixed rate, that no one in Ontario has the vision or the fortitude to handle the fluctuations of a variable rate, especially around election time. So the Minister of Energy has decided that since he wants to pay a much higher fixed rate, we're all going to have to pay a much higher fixed rate for electricity. Apparently Ontarians just can't be trusted to make those decisions for themselves.

As Progressive Conservatives, we trusted Ontarians in an open market to understand that if they want to save money, they should turn off their lights, install energy-efficient bulbs and adjust the air conditioning. It's not a difficult concept, but apparently the current Minister of Energy thinks the people of Ontario aren't smart enough to know that using less energy will save them money.

So the current Minister of Energy has created a massive energy police force, people who he is going to hire to break into your homes—without even a search warrant—break into your office, conduct massive search-and-seizure operations, even rifle through your garbage—

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: Jim, you know that's not true.

Mr. Jim Wilson: It's all in the act, in section 15. Read it if you haven't.

Why else are you hiring energy police with greater powers than a regular police officer? No warrants, just rubbish, and for what? To see if your toaster is energy-efficient enough? This is Orwell's Big Brother, with George Smitherman in the starring role as the Minister of Love.

There lies the true purpose of this bill. The Minister of Energy has used the guise of welcoming private power companies to cover up a massive power grab for himself.

Believe me, I know the temptation's there when you're minister to do these things, but we didn't do it. With over 40 new directive powers, including the power to tell the Ontario Energy Board, an independent, quasi-judicial body charged with adjudicating disputes and regulating fair rates, the minister will now have the power to tell this judicial body when to hold a hearing, what kind of hearing to hold and what to do in that hearing with this and 40 other new powers.

The act is designed to make the Minister of Energy the most powerful person in the province, above the law in terms of search-and-seizure powers, above the law in terms of free markets, above the law in terms of the independent judicial process.

It's amazing to me that he wants to interfere with the Ontario Energy Board, when the Honourable Floyd Laughren—I had appointed him chair of that energy board to help us implement this act. He was very helpful during those years, but I was very careful never to direct him in his decision-making. I was even very careful with a lot of companies and a lot of individuals that had grievances or cases before the board. They would call up and want to know at least when their case was going to be heard or when a decision was going to be rendered, and I was always very careful to never personally get involved or even ask Floyd, even though we met once a week in my office to go over the restructuring that we were doing and the restructuring that he was doing with the Ontario Energy Board. I certainly was very careful not to do any directives of the type that are contemplated in this legislation. In the energy world, in the regulatory world and in the quasi-judicial world, this stuff is truly earth-shattering, and the debate I've heard to date missed a lot of that. If I were Premier McGuinty, frankly, I would be worried about the true purpose of this Green Energy Act. I'm not sure that the Minister of Energy has fully explained it to the Premier of the province of Ontario.

As an Ontario consumer and taxpayer, I'm frightened by this act, because the Liberals have been less than forthcoming about the facts surrounding the details of this bill. They left important numbers unsubstantiated, including how much more Ontarians can expect to pay for their energy bills with this legislation. When it became clear that the public wouldn't get a straight answer from the Liberals on such important details, it was the Progressive Conservative caucus who commissioned the world-renowned London Economics International to do an independent study on just how much Ontarians can expect to pay for the Green Energy Act once it's fully implemented.

To be honest, all of us in the PC caucus suspected that Ontarians would have higher energy bills under this new Liberal energy scheme, but we had no idea just how much higher until London Economics submitted their final report, their full report, just recently. Their analysis suggests that the Green Energy Act could cost each household between \$247 and \$631, on average, per year between the years 2010 and 2025 as this act comes into

fruition. This means the costs could increase in the year 2025 by as much as \$1,200 per household. This is the equivalent of adding approximately two to six additional monthly electricity bills, or an increase of 15%.

If energy audit and energy conservation plan costs are added, the cumulative effect of the Green Energy Act is estimated at between \$19.4 billion and \$53 billion from 2010 to 2025. These numbers are staggering, and they're well above the 1% increase that the minister keeps saying: "That's all the consumers will see on their hydro bills." There's nothing presented by this government to substantiate the 1%, and the studies that are done, including—I had a meeting last week with Jack Gibbons of the Clean Air Alliance, and he agreed: The price of power is going to go up significantly at a time when we need that power to create jobs in the province of Ontario.

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The government says it's going to create 50,000 jobs with this Green Energy Act. That's really their only selling point, and it's really their only plan right now for economic job creation. But we were skeptical about that, so we asked London Economics, and they said, "No support has been provided for these estimates" of 50,000 jobs. In other words, the government made it up because they thought it sounded great. Let me quote from the executive summary of the London Economics report: "The estimate of potential new jobs should be put into perspective relative to labour market statistics in Ontario."

So you say you're going to create 50,000 jobs. Let me remind you that one of our largest sectors today, the auto sector, which we talk about every day in this House, only had 38,000 people employed in it—in direct vehicle manufacturing—in 2008. So you're actually creating, under one bill, more jobs than are currently in the auto sector? Completely unbelievable. Some 46,500 people were employed in electricity—generation, transmission and distribution, natural gas distribution and water and sewage utilities—in all of Ontario in 2008. So you're going to take all the utilities people who work for our municipalities and everybody who works for the electrical distribution companies, and in the next five years you're going to double that sector? It's just unbelievable how you came up with these 50,000 jobs.

Finally, as part of their executive summary they conclude by, "Furthermore, there are the economic implications of higher energy costs for the GEAct, which has the potential to negatively affect employment."

Just going back to what my colleagues said in their questions and comments, I was talking to the Ontario Clean Air Alliance last week, and agreeing that some of these contracts—and the reason we know costs will go up is that Ontarians are paying basically 6.6 cents per kilowatt hour right now. The new contracts that are going up are eight cents, 14 cents. We know of at least two major solar farms that are at 80 cents. That is several times the current price of power, and you're in a hurry to bring these things online.

The minister says, "It won't have that much effect on your monthly hydro bill in your home because it'll be a

very small amount of the electricity that we generate in Ontario, so when you average it all in your bill won't go up that much." That tells me that this bill isn't doing very much. If you're not really bringing in massive amounts of green power and you're just dithering around the edges, because the only price study you have—there is no study; it's just whatever Mr. Smitherman has told us—is that power is only going to rise 1%, that means you're bringing in diddly-squat. By his own admission, he's not bringing in enough power through 2025 to put a dent—this is his logic—in the price of electricity more than 1%. So that means you're probably not bringing in very much green power. You're bringing in enough to say that you're a green government. It's a photo op if I've ever seen one, and a series of photo ops that you'll have. You're really not affecting climate change; you're not affecting the environment. You will continue to need coal and gas plants to back up windmills and solar farms and other forms of alternative green energy.

It's very much a sham, this bill, and it's the only thing they've done. Remember, their tax cuts to create jobs, which they were always opposed to, don't take effect until the harmonized sales tax comes in on July 1, Canada Day, of 2010, so there's nothing that's going to happen to help create jobs in the province. This is their only job-creator, and it's a sham.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jean-Marc Lalonde: I was listening to the member from Simcoe-Grey. I have to say, as a former Minister of Energy, that way back in 2002, when the environment minister from his own government introduced a bill saying that they would freeze electricity at 4.3 cents per kilowatt hour at that time, we can remember what happened. We paid, in December 2002, \$1.33 a kilowatt hour and we were selling it back at 4.3 cents. So I don't know if you would call that good management.

Besides this, when they passed the bill, they also indicated that those that had signed contracts with private electricity retailers, consumers who signed the contracts, would be guaranteed of paying only 4.3 cents, and the whole time those people had signed contracts at 6.69 or 6.89 cents. We, the taxpayers of Ontario, had to pay that back to all the consumers that signed, and that really cost over \$1 billion to the taxpayers of Ontario. I wouldn't call this good management under the previous government.

I could tell you that right now we have a government in place that is looking to the future of our people by having good electricity available for everyone, every industry and every commercial sector, which we will have for the next 20 years in Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Norm Miller: It's my pleasure to add some comments to the speech from the member from Simcoe-Grey, who of course was a former Minister of Energy, Science and Technology, and certainly raised a lot of good points. Particularly, one of the points he brought up

was just the cost of electricity under this new proposed legislation, because for us as a competitive economy in the province of Ontario we need competitively priced electricity. We're not the experts on this, so as the opposition we commissioned a study by London Economics International LLC. In their study, "LEI's analysis suggests that the Green Energy Act could cost each household between \$247 to \$631, on average, per year between 2010 and 2025. This means the cost could increase by as much as \$1,200 per household in 2025." Obviously that's of huge concern to the people of this province. The government's talking about their 50,000 jobs that they protect in this bill. The LEI study found—well, I'll read exactly what they found: "The current projection put forward by the government is 50,000 new jobs in Ontario as a direct or indirect result of the Green Energy Act. No support is being provided for these estimates." As the member from Simcoe-Grey said, they just basically picked a number out of a hat. They go on to say, "Furthermore the economic implications of higher energy costs from the Green Energy Act, which has the potential to negatively affect employment"—and that is, I think, the real danger, that with the higher energy costs that this bill would inevitably bring forward, it will make the province uncompetitive. We'll lose 50,000 and more jobs as a result of the proposals in this new act.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Paul Miller: Obviously, my ideology is a little different than the member from Simcoe-Grey, but I must confess, he made some good points. I have some grave concerns about the estimate of 50,000 jobs. Let's say that was the scenario and they did create 50,000 jobs; well, I tell you right now, we've lost almost 20,000 jobs in Hamilton alone. So if we took 20,000 off the 50,000 and you split up the rest, the 30,000, that they say is going to happen and you divide that across the province of Ontario, that's not much of an impact, to say the least. I really don't know where they got that number from. I agree that there are no statistics to back that up. They're hoping. Maybe it's a wish list, I don't know, but I'm definitely not impressed with scenarios that are created that aren't factual. I like facts. I like goals, and goals that are reachable, not goals that are created. It doesn't make sense to do that. It gives the people of this province a false hope when they should be giving them actual jobs.

You're talking about a sector, an energy sector, that these jobs would be related to. You're not talking about a sector of manufacturing. You're not talking about automotive. You're not talking about some of the other major engines that drive this province. If you're going to isolate it to energy-created jobs, I think the scope is not wide enough—it's minimal at best. Frankly, when they're finished with all their talk, I want to see results, I want to see the 50,000 jobs and I want them to show where they're created because I don't think it's going to happen.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

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Mrs. Carol Mitchell: I'm very pleased to respond to the member from Simcoe-Grey. We'll take a little trip down memory lane here for a minute.

When the member was the Minister of Energy—I just want to jog his memory about an AMO meeting that we had when he introduced Bill 100, and it was the bear-pit session. One of the questions that was asked of him was from the mayor from Mississauga, Hazel McCallion. She asked him questions for a good five or six minutes, and I can tell you that he was not able to answer all of the difficult questions that the mayor had, but his comments back to the mayor were, “I think you have me off my Christmas list.”

I don't know if you remember that conversation at AMO, but what I wanted to give a sense of was that I became the chairman of our local distribution company after Bill 100 was introduced, and the local distribution companies were formed “to provide shoulder-to-shoulder services” was how the story went. But what in fact were formed were local distribution systems that were ill-equipped to plan for the future and to pay for the work that needed to be done. Not only was there stranded debt that evolved, and that's just a part of it, but there was also stranded generation of hydro. So it was a combination.

We never looked to the future and gave the LDCs what they needed within their jurisdiction to plan a system that was going to be reliable and give them the tools that they needed. So when the price was contained, it forced the systems to start to break down. There was not the refurbishment that needed to happen, there was not the conservation that needed to happen, so we were never going to arrive at a place in Ontario where we had the energy generation and the climate working so closely together.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for Simcoe-Grey, you have up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. Jim Wilson: Well, I'm glad the member from Huron-Bruce mentioned Hazel McCallion. It's funny, and I have the utmost respect for Hazel. She represented AMO on our committee that oversaw the restructuring. There were LDCs, there was OPG, and there was Hazel representing AMO—Ms. McCallion. It was difficult for her to understand during that time, perhaps, what we were doing. Maybe that was my fault in communicating, but I noticed that after the bill went through and after she discovered that council now owned the local Mississauga distribution system and that she could clear up some of her financial problems at council, she capitalized that system for \$200 million, so she mortgaged it. I never got a thank you note for making Mississauga \$200 million.

Mel Lastman did clear up some of his financial problems by capitalizing the hydro system here in Toronto to the tune of about \$150 million.

So once they figured out what I was doing, which was allowing councils to—you know, when I grew up around here, AMO used to have resolutions that were outstanding for 15 years saying, “We should run our councils like

a business,” and “Let us run businesses,” so I wanted them to run their local distribution systems as a business. They're stronger today. They've capitalized them, and for the most part, they didn't squander the money. They've either put it in trust or they're using the money to do exactly what you said.

There wasn't enough money. When Ontario Hydro was \$38 billion in debt, there was no money left in the system—no money left—and so the local distribution systems were starved. But when they were allowed to capitalize, to run like a business, to get a business return of—I don't know what year you took; you could have taken anything from zero to 9.8% on a business return. When they were allowed to do that and reinvest, you suddenly saw new towers popping up all over the province and new wires. We hadn't seen the trucks out in years.

So that's the wrong part to pick on. Maybe your local distribution system didn't have the favourable results that many others did, but they're stronger now. The reinvestment is there, and that money was made possible through Bill 100.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mr. Paul Miller: I just want to say, as far as the electric grid goes, I don't recall getting any rebates from Hydro over the years. They privatized, and ours went to a Horizon Utilities in our area. We had a very efficient Stoney Creek utility. Our electrical prices were very reasonable, probably the lowest in the Niagara Peninsula, and then we privatized and they went, as the member said, to a business situation, and we got hammered with hydro. Ours went up about double, so I'm not quite sure that deregulation and privatization was the best way to go in our area. I can't speak for other areas, but our area didn't benefit.

Anyways, getting on with it, the NDP listened carefully to the submissions from diverse groups at committee hearings. There was strong support for the aim of the bill to shift electricity supply towards renewable energy. The NDP also supports this aim. We need to shift rapidly to a greener energy and electricity supply for many reasons: to reduce greenhouse gas emissions; to reduce the reliance on coal and nuclear energy, both of which have serious health and environmental risks and dangers; and to seize the economic opportunity for the development of green jobs of the future throughout our province. But the NDP and many groups supportive of the aims of the bill have raised significant concerns about the approach of Bill 150.

First, environmental groups, unions, agricultural groups and others raised serious concerns about whether the bill, as it stands, will actually significantly increase the levels of renewable energy in this province. Some have urged the government to give greater priority to green energy over conventional energy by requiring the feed-in tariff mechanism for renewable energy projects to be the first line of offer rather than stating that it may be the first line of procuring new projects.

Several groups urged the government to commit to purchase all the energy produced from green projects to

make capital investments pay off, just as they do with nuclear projects. Some urged the government to stop giving nuclear power an advantage over renewable energy by ceasing the current practice of covering capital cost overruns for nuclear plants. Some called for the government to implement a green bond program to provide greater financing for renewable energy projects. Some groups urged the government to make it clear that all grid connection costs beyond shallow local costs would be covered by ratepayers to maximize the likelihood of the development of new renewable energy projects. Others called for amendments to strengthen the domestic content of new renewable energy projects to maximize the number of green jobs created here in Ontario, and some called for the government to set strong and specific minimum targets for conservation and new renewable energy in order to set minimum yardsticks against which to measure success in shifting Ontario toward its green energy goals.

The NDP introduced amendments covering all these points in order to strengthen the capacity of Bill 150 to bring renewable energy in Ontario online. The government refused them all, instead choosing to adopt only one or two far weakened amendments.

Second, environmental groups and others raised concerns that this bill does not do enough to fully pursue the most cost-effective and environmentally benign approach to providing electricity, conservation and energy efficiency. They wanted the government to ensure all cost-effective conservation and energy efficiency before new renewable projects would be built. They wanted the government to pay a feed-in tariff for combined heat and power systems which increase efficiency by using power for two purposes instead of one. They wanted the government to strengthen the Building Code Act to strengthen energy-efficiency requirements. They wanted the government to make changes to the Condominium Act to increase availability of financing for retrofit and energy-efficient improvements.

Again, the NDP introduced amendments to do these things, and again, the government voted them down. What a surprise—shot us down again.

Third, many citizen groups raised concerns that they would not be protected from potential negative health and environmental impacts of new renewable projects, particularly wind projects. Likewise, the NDP raised amendments to reduce the level of secrecy around these projects. We introduced amendments to put the onus on project developers to show that no ill effects would be brought about by projects. We introduced amendments to ensure that fewer projects would be exempt from appeals. We raised amendments to provide greater information and support to ensure full participation of individuals and groups concerned about the effects of new projects in their communities.

A key thing: letting the people in their communities have a say, letting them talk about their concerns about different types of green energy.

We raised amendments to protect the sensitive lands from the impacts of renewable projects. The agricultural

community had concerns, and we wanted to protect the lands that they are the stewards of. Unfortunately, once again, apart from relatively minor changes, the government refused the majority of these amendments as well.

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Fourth, a number of groups raised concerns about how vulnerable individuals and businesses in Ontario would be affected by hydro rate increases associated with the shift to new renewable energy. To address the concern, the NDP called for a permanent rate assistance program for low-income tenants. Unfortunately, once again, the amendment was defeated.

Finally, we heard from a number of groups and agreed that there was much need to increase support for public, not-for-profit, First Nations and local ownership of new renewable energy projects. We called for changes in these regards, and again, the changes were largely dismissed.

In sum, we are left with a bill that could have been made so much stronger than it is, with a little co-operation. It's a step in the right direction. We'll support it. We don't want to stand in the way of something that may be beneficial in a small way.

It's a testament to the hard work of many environmental groups, and particularly the Green Energy Act Alliance, that it has come as far as it has. But if the government had listened more carefully to many well-thought-out submissions made to the committee and been more open to a collaborative and constructive approach, it could have made the bill much stronger and set us on a much more promising path as a green and sustainable energy economy in our province, a goal that is crucial in importance for ourselves, our children and our planet.

I'd just like to reiterate some of the comments that my colleague the energy critic made that really stood out to me. I'd like to share them once again with the House.

"In Manitoba, we have a government that has become a leader in geothermal, that provides funding for householders to put in heat exchangers so they can take cold out of the earth or heat out of the earth. That isn't" exactly "electricity generation. That's taking advantage of heat and cooling storage in the ground, something we should be doing—an area where that jurisdiction is leading the way.

"In Quebec, they have investment in wind turbines that are changing the face of the Gaspé Peninsula. When we talk about investment in wind turbines in Quebec, you have to understand that they're very focused on the Gaspésie, on an area that has been chronically underdeveloped, that has been losing employment and losing population. When Quebec talks about 60% Quebec content for wind turbines, they're talking heavily about content from Gaspé. Companies are having to move into" the area "to make wind turbines, to make blades, to make the whole range of equipment to actually put those wind turbines in place." Also, the support groups for those turbines and the construction trades have benefited immensely, and they will have to continue a certain level of maintenance crews in the area to take care of these

windmills. "So an area that for generations has seen nothing but depopulation is seeing young people come back into the Gaspé because jobs are there that pay" decent money.

They sure could use this on the east coast. They could sure use this in Hamilton. We've lost all kinds—thousands—of jobs. We could build windmills in Hamilton. We could build them at National Steel Car, which is now trying to close and move to Alabama. The buildings are there; the workforce is there. They can retrofit that plant to do it. We have the transportation grid; we have the highways; we have the new expressway. We have sea, land and air—everything—in the Hamilton area to support these types of new industry. They should be utilized. We should be doing something for the Niagara Peninsula and Hamilton to put it back on the map. It was a strong manufacturing centre.

I'll tell you, if you drive down Burlington Street right now, you could fire a cannon off and not hit anybody. That's how bad it is. I can remember the days when the parking lots were full. You'd have to actually stand in line to punch in to go to work. You had trouble getting a parking spot in the morning. I'll tell you, it's an empty parking lot now—empty buildings, and thousands upon thousands of people out of work.

We've got to think outside the box. We've got to get people back to the manufacturing sector. These new green energy projects are a perfect opportunity to put the people of southern Ontario back to work.

"Quebec is using their green energy sector as an economic development tool—frankly, like Minnesota, which has a similar strategy in the north end of their state—and seeing the positive results that you can see if you're willing to invest substantially and understand where the future is going." Minnesota is taking the lead in this area.

"We need to have the same approach here in Ontario. We need to have a far more thoroughgoing and far more committed approach. I don't know yet if this act will give us that. I think the decision to actually go forward is beyond the act itself. You have to know that Premier McGuinty has made statements about the Green Energy Act and about the need to invest in the 21st century. When this act was introduced, he talked about the need for clean power. 'We need those jobs. We need clean electricity, and we need to assume our full responsibility in the face of climate change.' I have to say that's a great statement"—a wonderful statement. "It's hard to disagree with that statement. The question for all of us here is, will this act, will his power planning, get us to the point we want to be?" I'm not sure. Will it create 50,000 jobs? I doubt it.

"As written, this bill is set to underperform. The way it has been written allows the minister and any future minister to constrain investment in efficiency, conservation and renewables so that the market for nuclear power will be undisturbed. That is a mistake, because we need to prepare to go beyond the nuclear age. Even the Premier will talk about the fact that if he had a magic wand, if

there was the opportunity that we didn't need nuclear, that would be wonderful. He doesn't believe the time is at hand. Well, frankly, if the time isn't at hand now, the time may never come. The time is at hand now.

"I have to say that it is wrong and it is dangerous to play games with people. The minister has the power to correct many of the deficiencies in this legislation with regulation. He needs to use that power. He needs to use it quickly. He needs that power to get people to work. He needs to use that power to take on environmental concerns. He needs to use that power to set direction for industry in this province.

"If the act is simply used to divert attention and provide cover for a massive nuclear investment rollout, then we will see a substantial risk developing for the people of this province, both in terms of their industrial future and of their electricity" needs. "We need to go beyond tentative measures. We need to go beyond baby steps in protecting industry, in protecting the environment and in protecting jobs in this province. The minister and the Premier ignore that reality at their peril and they also ignore it at the peril of the province."

I'd just like to say that there were many good suggestions that came forward at committee from many different groups. We listened intently to those submissions, we shared them with our caucus, we discussed it in our caucus, and we had a good handle on what the people wanted to see. We will not stand in the way of this bill because we believe it's a start, that it's moving in the right direction. Does it hold everything we'd like to see? Obviously not. Does it hold 30% of what we'd like to see? Probably not, but it's a start.

Like I said earlier, and I'll reiterate: Retrofitting in this province, fixing the old buildings, insulating properly, utilizing new types of power, whether it be electric cars, solar, or wind turbines, is the way to go; we agree. But you have to have input from all the groups, the trades, and people as you move along in this direction, and be sure that it's going to be successful and not have a negative impact on people's communities, on their jobs, on their health. We have to make sure we're doing it right the first time, because we can't turn back the clock if we don't.

So I'm hoping that this bill will be up for new amendments shortly after it goes into law. I hope they're going to be flexible about input from the opposition side and also from the public, because I do believe, as a whole, we could probably do a lot of good things for this province. But if you're arrogant, if you think you know better, if you think your way is the only way, you're headed for disaster. I'm hoping that this government, the present government, will wise up and listen to some of the people on this side of the House, because whether it's the official opposition or the third party, there's a lot of experience on this side of the House. There's a lot of people that have lived through industry and lived through manufacturing that could make wonderful contributions to this bill down the road. I don't know why it wasn't done now. It's like the old story: I remember when they

built the Skyway Bridge. We wanted to twin it at that time. When they did build the second bridge, it cost 20 times as much 20 years later. But people had the foresight; they wanted to build that second bridge then. I've seen this happen so many times in the province, where they weren't thinking ahead, they weren't using common sense, and common sense has not prevailed a lot of times, not just in this House but in Ottawa and in all governments, local as well. Common sense does not prevail. I've witnessed it over many years. They try and try and sometimes get it right, but in most cases their arrogance gets in the way of their common sense, and that's unfortunate.

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In closing, I'd just like to say that the NDP will support this bill. There are a lot of things we would have liked to see changed in it. Unfortunately, like most of the bills I've brought forward, it falls on deaf ears at committee. They don't listen and they don't want to listen. They just want to get it through and get the photo op. That's unfortunate.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Rick Johnson: I appreciate the comments from the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek and I applaud him on his efforts for job creation. Hopefully, some of the wind turbines will be made with Hamilton steel.

I stand to speak in favour of Bill 150, the Green Energy Act. I applaud the vision and congratulate the minister and his staff for bringing it forward at this time. I greatly appreciate and respect the comments and concerns by all members who have spoken thus far in the debate. A special thanks to the member from Etobicoke–Lakeshore for earlier highlighting amendments made following consultations.

Since moving to Ontario in 1976, I've watched the growth that has taken place with houses and businesses across the regions. As we all know, homes use energy, businesses use energy, and the Green Energy Act opens doors for alternative energy. I have spoken already to several local businesses in my riding of Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock who have come forward with potential investments that they want to make. They're anxiously awaiting passage of this bill.

Also, the reality of this is that currently 40% to 50% of the energy used in our province is provided by nuclear energy. We need to secure that energy source. Many of my constituents in Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock worked very hard to build the nuclear plants in Pickering and Darlington. Many jobs will be created when the construction begins on the new plants. But I do share the concerns regarding nuclear waste, and I believe that we need to support government efforts in areas of research, innovation and education so that we can find a solution to nuclear waste. Fear-mongering isn't the way to go. What we have to do is inspire our young people to find a solution so that when we reach the point down the road, hopefully in a short period of time, we will know what to do with nuclear waste.

In closing, I would urge all members to support the Green Energy Act and send a message to the world that Ontario has a vision, that Ontario is a leader in green energy and that Ontario is ready for tomorrow's economy. So please support this act. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Thank you. Questions and comments?

Mr. Robert Bailey: I'd like to applaud the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek for his remarks. Also, I noted that he had some comments about his amendments not being acceptable. Don't feel alone. We made many substantive amendments also and not many of them were accepted either. You're not alone there, member.

We've got some concerns on our side of the House: We feel that this legislation is intrusive, it's nothing more than a new tax on families and businesses in Ontario, and it's going to drastically increase the cost of doing business in this province. The government member spoke about having a vision for Ontario. I think there's maybe a vision there, but it's possibly clouded. This Green Energy Act is going to increase the cost of doing business in Ontario. There's no doubt about that. We commissioned a report from an independent agency that points out some of those costs.

As far as the part about increasing jobs, I also hope that there are some jobs created in Hamilton in the steel industry when we build these turbines that are supposed to be coming. Speaking about turbines—

Mr. John O'Toole: Solar power.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Yeah, solar power. There we go, if the sun shines.

We had many people approach us at committee and speak about the health concerns they had with wind turbines; for example, Dr. Robert McMurtry, a well-respected doctor. I noted after that that the Premier made some statements about possibly appointing a panel to conduct studies of that, so maybe there was some admission that—

Interjection: Appoint a solar panel.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Yeah, appoint a solar panel to possibly study the health effects on individuals who have documented many concerns.

I look forward to debating this further later, and I'm looking forward to the interaction between the members as we do that. It's a pleasure, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I want to congratulate the member from Hamilton East for what I thought was a good presentation on the bill.

I agree with him. The government is trying to take a step in the right direction. The problem is, it's a pretty small one. If you look at what the government is trying to do, the bill has a really good bill name. It's called the Green Energy Act. Who can be opposed to the idea of green energy? So the bill title, I thought, was a really nifty one, as they said as I was growing up. It was the language of the late 1960s, early 1970s. We think it's a nifty title.

The only problem is, when you look at the details of the bill, it's pretty lacking when it comes to making those larger steps forward that we need to take as a society towards really greening our energy consumption and greening our energy generation here in the province of Ontario.

He pointed out the jobs that could be created in Hamilton if we were only serious around the issue of really saying, "Let's invest in the renewables. Let's look at what technologies we can build here in Ontario when it comes to solar, wind and others, how we can put a buy-Ontario clause within the legislation to make sure that we give incentives to manufacturers here in Ontario to produce these particular goods." Imagine the jobs that could be created just installing and maintaining some of this equipment around the province.

So the member is right. The government is trying to do the right thing. We give them credit for that; they're trying. Whenever they try, we should say congratulations, but the try is just a very small step.

I think the member is right when he says there are a number of things that the government could have done that would have taken this bill a lot further. We could have done a real buy-Ontario provision in the bill. We could have been very serious about setting targets and goals when it comes to renewable energy. We could have been very serious around the issues of amending the building code to make sure we use the best of technologies to make our buildings as efficient as possible. I want to congratulate him for what I thought were some good points.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Phil McNeely: I'm pleased to have this opportunity to respond to the member from Hamilton East-Stoney Creek. I'd also like to include something from what was said by the member for Simcoe-Grey.

As everyone knows, the inspection and search provisions related to home energy audits and minimum energy efficiency standards for appliances and products will be eliminated. That was thrown in from a bill before we took government, somewhere in the early 2000s. The minister said in this House that would be coming out, and during committee, that did come out. So to say that that's still in there is just not correct.

I would also like to respond to the member from Hamilton East-Stoney Creek about some of the major changes that occurred. Ontarians made hundreds of constructive suggestions to make the proposed Green Energy Act even more effective in creating a greener economy for Ontario. We have proposed a number of amendments and policy developments to respond to a number of issues raised at the standing committee, in legislative debate or when the bill was posted on the Ontario environmental registry.

The home energy audits—of course, the buyer can opt out if the audit is not desired.

Community consultation—creating a new section that clearly ensures that administration of the Green Energy

Act is done in such a way as to promote community consultation.

Health concerns—there are many grounds for appeal under the Environmental Protection Act to protect against serious health effects.

Mandating domestic content—a new section which clearly establishes the government's commitment to domestic content, to job procurement in Ontario.

Minister's directive powers—clarify that procurement directives under the new directive authority focus only on renewable energy, energy efficiency and conservation.

The Environmental Commissioner of Ontario—ensuring that the ECO can meet the responsibilities outlined in the Green Energy Act.

So there were many, many of the recommendations that were taken into this new act, in the Green Energy Act as we see it now, with \$900 million going towards conservation.

It's a great, great act and will further—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Thank you. The member from Hamilton East-Stoney Creek, you have up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. Paul Miller: I would like to thank all the members for their input. I'm sure they believe that the bill is a step in the right direction, and I, too, think it's a step in the right direction. I won't deny that, but like I said, there are a lot of parts that weren't addressed in this particular bill, which is a little bit frustrating for us.

When the member says that there are amendments in there that will address job loss and give incentives to manufacturers to create jobs, well, I'll be waiting with bated breath in Hamilton. In the last 20 years, we're down about—well, 30,000 jobs are gone, and we just had two major steel companies close the doors, one in Lake Erie and one in Hamilton. They are just on hot idle. So if this new green energy bill is going to create jobs for the people in Hamilton as far as making steel and producing wind structures and solar structures, we have all the welders you could need in the world who are unemployed right now at National Steel Car. We have a building there that is sitting idle.

1700

The manufacturer is trying to move to Alabama because he's getting incentives in Alabama, and our government is not giving enough incentives to keep him in Hamilton. You've got to ask yourself, why is he moving to Alabama? If you look at what they offered him in Alabama, we couldn't even come close to it. Free land, no taxes for 10 years—it's unbelievable what they're offering to bring these businesses there. Frankly, the owner is going to go where he's going to get the best bang for his buck.

My city is under siege. There's not much left. I'll tell you, you can fire a cannon down Burlington Street. It was the hub of Ontario for manufacturing. I can actually drive down the street and I'm lucky if I see a person walking in the plant. I'm talking hundreds and hundreds of acres of empty buildings and plants. If this bill is going to do that and put people back at work, I'm all for it. I'll wait and see.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mr. Toby Barrett: While we debate this proposed legislation, Bill 150, known as the Green Energy Act—I've also heard it referred to as the power grab act. And I'm actually surprised: I think there's maybe a dozen and a half government members sitting here, and I don't know why they aren't debating this legislation. It was your turn to debate. I'm not sure what the reticence is on the government side, why the hesitation.

Interjections.

Mr. Toby Barrett: I suppose if I respond to heckles, you can get on the record that way, but I'm really concerned why government members are not debating this particular piece of proposed legislation.

When we look at this bill, we do agree with some of the overarching goals—those goals that do contribute to a cleaner environment as far as air quality. We note that the government—and the government members will know this—has gone off course somewhat in achieving some of those goals. We have that elephant in the room, that looming question: Just how much is this going to cost? We see government members shying away from addressing that bit of bad news, shying away from even addressing the bill itself with respect to how much it's going to cost.

We hear an initial cost of \$5 billion being thrown out. That comes from one source: the consumer of electricity. If you're a mathematician, you can follow our energy critic, John Yakabuski, use the logic. He figures that the total, split amongst Ontario's 4.2 million electricity consumers, will come in at around \$1,200 per consumer per year. That depends on a number of variables and just how many different factors you are going to cost in. To his credit, Mr. Yakabuski's been citing that figure ever since the government initially came up with what I considered somewhat of a hare-brained scheme.

Since that time, we've gone to some experts, we put up some money and had an opinion from London Economics International, also known as LEI. They followed through on a study—I think most people in this room would have access to that study now—that bolstered some of these numbers. Here's what they came up with: As we've heard, London Economics did an analysis suggesting the Green Energy Act would cost each household somewhere between \$247 and \$631, on average, per year over 2010 to 2025. This means that the cost could increase by as much as \$1,200 per household per year by 2025. So here's that \$1,200 figure again.

These figures can translate into anywhere between two to six additional monthly electricity bills. We're looking at an increase of about 15%. But it does get worse; it gets worse than this. We also have the energy audit and the energy conservation plans. These have a cost. These are called for in Bill 150, and the cumulative effect here is estimated at between \$19.4 billion and \$53 billion, again over that period 2010 to 2025.

Now, let's factor in the additional cost of home audits, for example, something that has been talked about a great

deal in the media over the last several months. The cost of a home audit comes in at about \$300 a shot, and this also would apply for those who—we just heard the sad story in Hamilton; I'm hearing of thousands of jobs being lost and on the line. Again, whether you have a job or not, you would be subject to this kind of home audit, a tax grab, if you will. These kinds of audits essentially tack additional costs on the consumer, whether they can afford it or not and whether they can afford those renovations or not. Especially if they're trying to sell that home, they may no longer be able to afford it.

We're in a recession. We hear of every government, certainly in the industrialized world, every news channel over this winter talking about the need for stimulus, about doing everything we can to wake up what is essentially a slumbering economy, and then we see a government here that comes up with new ways to drain that economy.

So again, the price: at least \$1,200 per customer, a 15% increase, quite a bit higher than that figure I was hearing from this government a number of months ago. It's hard to believe they were saying this: a 1% increase in the cost of electricity.

How do homeowners afford this kind of cost? How do businesses afford this kind of cost? How can you absorb a 15% increase in electricity? I do shake my head. My colleague from Wellington-Halton Hills read into the record the very words of our present Premier on this same subject, and this was 10 years ago. Bear with me; I do wish to read a quote: "We have got to question the wisdom of the minister in introducing a bill in a recession which is saying to employers and investors, 'Here comes an additional tax which we're going to tack on to your hydro bill, a tax which has nothing to do with hydro, a tax which you won't find in any other jurisdiction in North America'.... Which group or groups were crying out for this change? Who wants government to use Hydro as a tool for carrying out social policy initiatives and thereby drive up hydro rates? Surely not Hydro's rate-payers.... Surely not business, which is already itself besieged by the recession." That was a recession, as we know, of 10 years ago, and of course that was a speech given in this House by the member for Ottawa South, also known as Dalton McGuinty.

When it comes to price, the minister likes to bring forth another red herring, essentially to throw us off the trail. We hear the much-ballyhooed claim of 50,000 new jobs. I don't know whether members present have had a chance to attend the hearings or read through the transcript of the public hearings or whether they've really given much thought to the hearings, but public presentations occurred on Bill 150. If you haven't had a chance, there was testimony, for example, by the Clean, Affordable Energy Alliance. I'd like to introduce you to the words of their spokesperson, Carol Chudy, who lives down Sarnia way. I'll quote Ms. Chudy: "No concrete information has been provided to demonstrate how or when these jobs will be created. When analyzed, reports promising large job gains were found to contain dubious

assumptions and a disregard for basic economic principles. The jobs include large numbers of clerical, bureaucratic and administrative positions—non-productive, expensive positions that raise costs for electricity consumers without adding value to Ontario's economy. The actual employment gains will be totally swallowed up in the job losses that will result from higher energy costs. The 300,000 manufacturing jobs plus supporting retail and service sector jobs lost in Ontario over the past four years will be just the beginning."

1710

I've known Carol Chudy for five years now, I suppose. I've worked with her and her associates and I'm always impressed with their approach. They deal with the science, they deal with environmental issues and they take an economic analysis to the kind of work that they do, all done with a non-emotional approach.

There's some additional information that Carol Chudy had with respect to cost. "The act"—again, Bill 150—"will foster additional costs, including renewable energy at triple to 20 times the cost of existing resources." Again, think of the price of coal, for example. "Real estate energy audits, which 86% of the public opposes; the special cost associated with fuel use; \$1.6 billion to roll out the smart grid." That's going to be a very expensive project to snap your fingers. It's not that easy to establish a smart grid across the province of Ontario.

"Costs from municipalities, hospitals, schools and universities to prepare and update energy efficiency plans, which will all be passed down to Ontario taxpayers; and restriction on the sale or lease of products currently in use." Again, cost is important. We have to work our way through and just determine what is going to be the price for this kind of legislation.

In addition to the financial ramifications that our rate-payers, our consumers and our businesses will all face, it seems that local levels of government will see their planning powers lifted as a cost of this top-down green gambit, if you will. Currently, a proponent with an energy proposal—this is the way it works now—submits their request to the municipality. It's reviewed by the planning department. The community is notified. They have an opportunity to provide some input. Council votes on it. Oftentimes the proponent has to do an environmental review on the particular project. Again, the public has an opportunity to examine the findings and, as we know, these findings can also be appealed to the Ministry of the Environment. Oftentimes a full environmental assessment can be requested.

This came from Grant Church. He's an area energy expert down in my riding. Grant lives in Cayuga. He testified before the committee hearings on this bill. I'd like to quote Grant: "All those rights will disappear under the act. It will be between the Minister of Energy and the green energy proponent. Absolute power will be held by the minister." Grant goes on to say, "Lord Acton said it well: 'Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely.'" That's Lord Acton speaking, not Grant Church.

So again, what price? The question really becomes more significant when we pay attention to, for example, the price of the health of people who are living close to some of these very large industrial wind turbines. Our farms have had windmills certainly going back 100 years. I know the tower is still up on our home farm. This is small technology, farm by farm, enough energy there to pump water out of a well, in our case a deep sulphur well, into the water trough, which provides a modicum of storage depending on how many cattle we had in the barnyard at that time. The kinds of wind towers that we have on our farms are minuscule and in many ways perhaps more appropriate than some of these very large, industrial-style turbines that you can spot miles and miles away, tens of miles away. So there's a concern here about trampling on municipal siting and zoning powers.

The reports coming from these industrial-style wind turbines, something that's coming forth more and more—in fact, yes, I think it was probably in today's *Toronto Star*. There is an article, "Fighting For, and Against, the Wind," which gives us both sides but lets us know some of the other, disturbing sides—the price that some people are paying for these very large industrial wind turbines that this government is favouring.

Here's what Helen Fraser had to say in the *National Post*:

"Our home was 423 metres from the nearest turbine." I apologize; I'm not sure what that distance is in English. "When we first heard about the project, we were trying to be green—we always recycled more than we threw in the trash—so I thought it was great. I was in favour of them, even as they were doing the construction around us. But my health did deteriorate immediately when the turbines were on ... I had ringing in my ears, it felt like there was something crawling in my ears—I said 'what on earth is going on?' And then the shadowing effect when the sun is behind the blade, it was so bad, I just thought the top was going to blow off the top of my head. But we went camping in July and it cleared up—I didn't have a headache, I wasn't going to the bathroom as frequently, I had none of the itchy ears. I came back and it immediately started again. When the blades were facing the house, I couldn't concentrate at all, I couldn't sleep, my body would ache ... so finally I started to clue in that something had to be going on with the turbines. I could tell before I got out of bed, just based on how I felt, whether they were running."

That's from Helen Fraser, a former neighbour of Melancthon, a wind project in the province of Ontario.

Ms. Fraser apparently is far from being alone. Reports are beginning to emerge at what I consider to be an alarming rate. While the Premier arrogantly labels these kinds of concerned Ontarians as NIMBYs, I wonder if he would be so cavalier if he had to live next to one of these very large behemoths. In fact, I would encourage the Premier's energy minister to perhaps spend a night next to one of these large turbines and report back.

And it's not without precedent for provincial members of Parliament to go in and get the information first-hand.

I think of John Tory. Here's an MPP who was willing to go down to Caledonia and stay overnight right next to the barricades put up adjacent to Six Nations.

Hon. Jim Watson: That worked out well.

Mr. Toby Barrett: Well, yes, it didn't work out well for Caledonia. To his credit, Mr. Tory had the guts to visit Caledonia probably 14 times. And I'll throw that challenge out to some government members across the way.

Interjection.

Mr. Toby Barrett: Yes, I don't think the good people of Caledonia know about that.

Hon. Jim Watson: He didn't send out a press release.

Mr. Toby Barrett: I don't think you did either.

Back to the bill that we're debating: Maybe people are either afraid to go to Caledonia or spend a night next to one of these wind turbines because they've probably been reading some of the science and listening to some of the doctors and what they've been saying, and they're realizing that perhaps these wind concerns may be a little more than some of the hot air I'm hearing in here this afternoon.

1720

For those who haven't been reading these reports, there's quite a laundry list with respect to the impact of these industrial wind towers:

- noise, obviously, reports that noise can be heard up to 10 kilometres away and can induce sleep disturbance, depression, chronic stress, migraines, nausea and memory loss;

- strobe and flicker effects relating to vertigo, dizziness and nausea;

- stray voltage near homes, related to dizziness, fatigue, headaches, adverse effects on farm animals, as we know;

- blade failure, which can throw a piece of a blade or debris over 500 metres; and

- ice throws, where chunks of ice can be thrown 100 metres.

We have to factor these kinds of reported health concerns in when we try and determine just what will be price of this particular piece of legislation.

The Premier has said, "Which group or groups were crying out for this change? Who wants government to use Hydro as a tool for carrying out social policy initiatives and thereby drive up hydro rates? Surely not Hydro's ratepayers.... Surely not business, which is already ... besieged by the recession." So these kinds of cost considerations, whether financial or health, are weighty enough, but coupled on top of that is the issue that this tool, potentially achieving some of the green goals that this particular legislation is concerned with, could be doomed to failure. This has been raised in the House. We have to talk about our coal-based economy and our nuclear economy when we consider debate on this legislation—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Thank you.

Mr. Toby Barrett: —and I have run out of time.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Yep. Thank you. Questions and comments?

Mr. Phil McNeely: I wish to respond to some of the issues raised by the member from Haldimand-Norfolk, particularly on the health concerns. The Ministry of the Environment will establish and fund an economic research chair to examine potential public health effects through renewable energy projects. Ongoing review of the health and scientific research by the Ministry of the Environment is part of policy development under this act. That is certainly very high among the issues that have to be dealt with in the Green Energy Act.

For the green jobs, as with most types of economic projections, we looked at historical data. We based our GEA job estimate on the number of jobs that have typically been created by the type of work that will be required. For example, we consulted with Hydro One to establish how many jobs would be typically associated with insulation of transmission lines. We also relied on studies to back up these estimates in order to ensure a reasonable level of consistency with the levels of jobs created from similar projects in other jurisdictions. There will be no doubt that a lot of jobs will be created there.

I'd just like to talk about the home energy audit again. It was brought up and it's information that the purchaser of a new home can always waive the right to receive. But it's \$150—the province supports it at \$150. It opens up that whole process after going after up to 10,000 grants from both Canada, which supports this program, and Ontario, which supports the program. Of course, it was in the Conservatives' platform in 2007 as something to do with the mandatory audit, and they've just changed their minds on it as well.

The minister spoke in this House about the increase in costs of energy and that the bills would be 1% per year going forward. I think that—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Thank you.

Mr. Phil McNeely: —deals with most of the issues that were brought up by this—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Thank you. The member for Parry Sound-Muskoka.

Mr. Norm Miller: I'm pleased to add some comments to the speech of the member from Haldimand-Norfolk on the green energy bill, Bill 150. Certainly members of the PC Party are in favour of sustainable alternative energy, but we're also concerned about the cost of electricity to the people of Ontario and jobs. We had a study commissioned by London Economics International on the unsubstantiated claim of 50,000 new jobs made by the government. They in fact pointed out in the study that there's no support for these estimates.

On the question of the mandatory energy audits after you sell your home, that has been modified a bit so that I believe the seller can waive that requirement. My feeling about energy audits—I just had one done in my own home—is that I think they're a good idea but they should be voluntary, where the homeowner feels there's some benefit to the energy audit, not something that should be required. I've been receiving quite a few letters and e-mails from constituents concerned about that.

I just had an energy audit done myself in the past year, and we're just finishing off putting a new air-to-air heat pump, a new energy-efficient door and an air circulation HRV system into our home. We're going to look at putting in a solar hot water system, having met with John Verway of Copperhill Solar. When they get their system certified we'll look at that.

Members of the PC Party are in favour of reducing our energy use and means of stimulating more sustainable and renewable energy use in the province, but we're also concerned about the thousands of jobs that may be lost through higher energy prices and the fact that our energy users, those dependent on electricity, will have no choice but to pay for the extra higher costs of electricity this bill will bring about.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Paul Miller: I'd like to commend the member from Haldimand-Norfolk. He has some grave concerns that I agree with.

I'd like to talk about the home audit that the government has been touting as so wonderful. Let's take a look at an 80-year-old person living in a home, and the buyer wants to buy a starter home. The young couple comes to the house and says, "Do you have your energy audit? I'd like the look at it." The person says, "Well, I didn't get it done." They say, "Well, we don't know what's wrong with your house."

Even if they did get it done and said, "Okay. You need new windows, you need a new roof, you need this and that," a person who is 80 years old and on a fixed income cannot afford that. The government says, "Oh, but we have programs to support that." Even if they supported 75% of it and the home required \$15,000 or \$20,000 worth of work, what have they done now? They've had an encumbrance put on the property because now the elderly person can't sell the property because they didn't have a home audit and they can't afford to do the repairs. What does that person do? I'll tell you what they do. They sit in their house until the city repossesses it because they can't afford to fix the house and no one will buy it because it doesn't have all these top-grade efficiencies.

I really think this part of the bill is going to be a detriment. It's not good. This home audit is really going to be a burden on seniors and people who cannot afford it. I hate to tell you this, but 18% of the people in my community live below the poverty level. They're lucky if they can pay their hydro bill, let alone get the house fixed to sell it. This government must walk around with bags on its head. You don't get it. You don't take a look at people who are low income. All you talk about is people who make \$100,000 or more. How about the poor people in our community? They can't afford these types of things. You're not living in a real world. You haven't got a clue. Get out there and come to my community and I'll introduce you to some of these people you want to have a home audit. Get real.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: It's a pleasure to have a couple of minutes to say a few words on the comments made earlier. I just wanted to recount a little story that I heard a while ago. It was about two boys who used to go to school, and they passed by the same backyards every day and they'd see fences. Through each fence, they could see what was there. There was one house that had a stone wall, and they couldn't see through it. So one of the boys said to the other, "How are we going to ever know what's on the other side?" What one of the boys did was he tossed his cap over the top of the fence. The result was that the two of them had to go back and get it and they found out what was there.

This bill, Bill 150, the Green Energy Act, is a movement in a new direction. It's been carefully thought out. There are a lot of checks and balances here to make sure that the consumer is protected, and it's not just us in the government who are saying good things about it. Talk to the experts, people like Mr. Drummond, the economist from TD Bank. He'll say that it's in the new technologies where you're going to find jobs, not in the old places. You're going to have to take that cap off, throw it over the fence, go over there and see what's on the other side. You're not going to go back to the old ways. The old ways are gone. We're not saying that in a negative way, but the world has changed. People out there know that, the majority of people know that, and we are providing an opportunity for people to be involved in something that will create jobs. You don't need the proof from us. It comes from the experts. Remember that.

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The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Member for Haldimand-Norfolk, you have up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. Toby Barrett: Thank you. I appreciate the feedback, the various comments around the horn.

The energy audit was just mentioned by the member, who's joined our side. That energy audit, as we know, and this is much publicized, comes at somewhere around \$300. You add in, and I didn't talk about this cost, the cost of energy audits plus the energy conservation plan, and the cumulative effect is somewhere between—this is in billions of dollars—\$19.4 billion and \$53 billion, again over that time period of 2010 to 2025. That's on top of the figures that we did receive from London Economics International—that figure of the cost per household of \$1,200 per year up to 2025. Again, it's about a 15% increase. That's equal to somewhere between two to six additional monthly electricity bills.

We have to figure in other costs. I didn't have time to talk about the cost of generation and the cost of interconnection, as new sources of energy are artificially subsidized and given preference to allow them to hook up, oftentimes in remote areas, which makes it very difficult to get the transmission infrastructure in place to accommodate them—so costs with interconnection.

The smart grid—I mentioned that briefly—is expensive to implement. Conservation and demand management, these kinds of initiatives: You've got to add in that

cost. One final cost that may not be that significant in the big picture but it is significant: When you establish this Renewable Energy Facilitation Office, you've got to add that cost in too.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate? The member for Durham.

Mr. John O'Toole: It's a pleasure to be able to speak this afternoon.

Interruption.

Mr. Paul Miller: Submarine diving?

Mr. John O'Toole: It's the submarine going down for the last time.

Look, this bill of all bills is a lot of ado about nothing. In fact, if you want to look at the act: We've made our points, but I want to review it because our member from Haldimand-Norfolk just spoke, as well as the earlier speaker, Mr. Wilson, who was the Minister of Energy and Technology, and the NDP as well—on this side of the House, probably on both parts. There's a lot in here that really is not very substantive.

If you look at the renewables—let's talk about the bill in some sequence. We have about six points that we want to make in such a limited time, because they're trying to rush this through. Here are the six points. I want to make sure that I get this on the record. Often I sort of wander a bit, but this time it's all scripted. This text today has been prepared.

Number one, it's the Green Energy Act. We understand the code language in the title. How can you vote against green energy? We're all for it on this side of the House but there's nothing here, okay? There's nothing here.

Interjection.

Mr. John O'Toole: I've got more to say.

It's nebulous. It's one of those, "We'll get to the detail later," here.

The plan clearly talks about solar, wind, geothermal, biomass—generally renewables—and we're going to talk about renewables and how much of the total supply mix these renewables might take. I'm going to use the IESO and the OPA, the Ontario Power Authority's supply mix report that that was commissioned by this government. Not many members over there even know that. That report was the very first thing they did, and they already know the answer, so they're talking about a very small issue here.

What our initiative has always stressed is conservation. The energy you don't consume or waste is the energy you don't have to generate. They use the term "conservation culture." The conservation culture is missing over there. It's a term. It hasn't penetrated their culture.

Mr. Robert Bailey: It's impervious.

Mr. John O'Toole: You know, it's all talk.

Energy costs money. We know that.

Another unique component of energy is this—and I've said this several times, and it may be repetitive here. My speech is that important that I'd stress these points. Energy's a non-discretionary consumption. What I mean

by that is, you don't have any choice for most of it. At home, there are certain things you have to do. You have to turn on the lights to see in case you fall. You have to turn on something to cook your food or to make your cup of tea in the afternoon. You have to turn on the furnace or the air conditioner. Our life is designed around this invisible commodity called electricity to really support the standard of living—turning on the television, the radio, the computer, all of these—

Mr. Robert Bailey: The hot tub.

Mr. John O'Toole: Well, these things are all choices that people make, but there's very, very little discretionary consumption. Studies have shown this, Mr. Speaker, and you would know this; you've been here longer than I have. It seems that way, anyway.

Quite honestly, though, what happens is that about 1,000 kilowatt hours a month is the normal consumption—so get used to it. When your bill is now 1,000 kilowatt hours a month, of that, let's say there might be 10% discretion—don't have that afternoon cup of tea. That's the only way seniors on a fixed income are going to save. Why? The price of energy now is five cents a kilowatt hour. That price of the electrons themselves—look at your bill. Today, the actual price of electricity is the smallest part of the bill.

Mr. Phil McNeely: We're paying for the stranded debt.

Mr. John O'Toole: Look at the bill. Most people, including the critic over there who's barracking all the time, don't have a clue. The stranded debt was from the 20 years of inefficiency in the energy sector.

Here are a couple of things that people don't know. There's another part on there called the line loss charge, which is about 0.03 cents per kilowatt hour for the electrons that are dispatched from the generation site—Darlington nuclear, Niagara Falls. The electrons go through the wire, but by the time they get to your house, 20% of the electrons are gone. They have to be paid for, so you're paying for the dispatched electricity to your house. You're paying that charge for stuff you don't even use. That's a tax.

A kilowatt hour is now about 5.3 cents. With this bill—and I'm going to substantiate this with documents I've collected—it's going to be around 15 to 20 cents a kilowatt hour. That's a 300% increase in price. Seniors don't know what's going to happen.

I did a press release—I've got to put this on the record. Formally, I've got to put this on the record. My press release is right here. Here it is. This is my press release, and I'll just read it: "New energy is going to cost up to \$1,200 per household."

Mr. Mike Colle: Produce the documents.

Mr. John O'Toole: The documents are here. He's asked for them. Write me a letter and I'll send them to you. I'll get back to you as soon as I can.

I have a weekly column, and I encourage people, if you want a copy of my weekly column—they're written with as much objectivity as possible. But I do point out the weaknesses—and I've pointed this out time and time

again. I'm getting a lot of feedback now from people who know I'm on the right track. But I think it's important to move forward with the discussion—I only got through to point 3 there, on energy costs.

The Liberal plan that they're not really telling too many people is—

Mr. Robert Bailey: It's a secret.

Mr. John O'Toole: Well, you should be listening, though, because it's \$5 billion. Where does the government get the \$5 billion? Let's follow the money. They get the \$5 billion from you when you turn the switch on or off, or turn on the dishwasher or the dryer. We know that it's \$5 billion, and they say that it's going to create 20,000 jobs. Well, I've got reports here today, even from the power workers of Ontario, that dispute that. Of course they're going to need some jobs to build more wires and the smart grid, and to put up wind turbines and things like that. But these are not jobs that are going to replace the steelworkers, the auto workers, the hard-working, well-paid jobs. When you build these wind plants and the solar plants, nobody works there. There are one or two people who go around with an oil can or something. I don't know exactly what they do, but there are no jobs. The sun shines—it's direct energy, really, and it has to be converted into AC power. It's DC power first. When you convert it, you lose energy there.

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Now, I've just got to make the plan—there's \$5 billion, 20,000 jobs; that's not been substantiated. There's no reports. We did one from the London School of Economics group, a brilliant group of people. The other thing that really bothers me—this is a more subtle part of the bill—is this idea that they're going to override municipal planning and conservation authorities. I was shocked when I heard, for instance, that on the green-belt—you know, it's beautiful trails and riding your bicycle—there will be a big wind turbine. Can you imagine? They can just override planning authorities and put wind turbines all along that bicycle trail. And young kids like yourself could be hit by one of those big props going around—three- to five-megawatt wind turbines, great big thunderous things, almost frightening, really. And then the solar panels to create enough energy—you know, a solar panel farm that they're building down in Sarnia is 500 times as big as the Legislature here. All the land it's taking up could be farmed, making food for children in Africa or places like that. I am just shocked at some of the stuff that's in this bill.

But there's another part, the home energy audit. I think they've listened to this, because this was another tax, pure and simple. It was a mandatory audit; it was a tax on the homebuyer. Blah, blah, blah. That's another tax. Plus, remember, I said the energy is going up.

Now here's the other part. I've discovered this: In my riding of Durham there's a plan to build two reactors—new AECL reactors, I hope. I'm going to make my argument here fairly straightforward because I want it on the record so I can send it out to all the power workers in my riding. I'm on your side. I think the government and Mr.

McGuinty are wrong here. AECL is the designer and developer of the Candu reactor. It's Canadian technology. It's knowledge-based economy. It's knowledge workers. These are skilled engineers and technical support people, in the design and development, the installation and build, and the maintenance. We want to keep these jobs. What have I got coming from Premier McGuinty? They're going to look at the French company. Wait a minute here. AECL is our—I was shocked again when this happened, this betrayal of Canadian knowledge. They've got this competitive bid going on. This is important; I want this on the record here. Areva is the French consortium company that's bidding against AECL's Candu reactor. They are different technologies. Ours has been here at Darlington and Pickering and the Bruce plant. There's one other one, the Gentilly plant, in Canada.

Here's my argument; it's very important. We should be supporting our own technology. It should be the highest, safest quality that we can possibly have, by all peer reviews. We've never had a Three Mile Island or a Chernobyl. What's the problem here? It's been operating for 30 years, and we're throwing it under the bus. I've discovered what it is, and I put this on the record directly to the Premier. What's happening here? AECL is a federal agency, a crown agency, and the big problem is that the Darlington reactor was originally priced at \$4 billion. When it was completed, it was \$14 billion. The big debate was that Ontario was left holding the bag. They were left holding the bag primarily because of the intervention by Bob Rae and David Peterson; basically that was it.

Mr. Paul Miller: Rae's a Liberal.

Mr. John O'Toole: Both of the Liberal parties; the NDP/Liberal Party. In fact, they were interfering because there was a lot of protest about building it. But here's what happened. Let's say there was an overrun. I guess the province of Ontario had to eat it. Somebody said before, "What about the debt retirement charge that's on your bill?" That's because of all this government intervention. Here's the problem, though: On the new bill that's going to occur—congratulations, they're going to build more nuclear generation, which is good. This is the real thing; this may be a discovery for most people here. The real fight behind the scenes, behind the debate here—this is all a disguise—is about who's going to own the overrun—the on time, on budget—for the new-build nuclear. And here's what I've discovered. They're trying to argue, "We're going to use Areva unless the federal government, Stephen Harper, assumes the liability and overrun on any new build." That's exactly what it's about. They're trying to get the federal government to say, "Look, we'll take any overruns."

Well, here's what should happen—and I put this to the Premier: Let's get on with it. The province of Ontario has all of the Candu support industries. It's located in Mississauga. I've met with a couple of the consultants and I put this on the table to them, and I'm not making this up. This is not light-hearted; this is serious stuff. I said to

them, "Do you think that they're playing political games here?" They didn't want to say, but it's true. They want Stephen Harper to eat the overruns.

Now, Stephen Harper, as the Prime Minister of Canada, is going to go to Quebec. Quebec has hydro power; they don't want to support nuclear. So they move to our next-door neighbour, Manitoba. That's hydroelectric power; they don't want to support nuclear. So you go to BC. It's hydroelectric; they don't want to support nuclear. Go to all the provinces. Newfoundland; it's hydroelectric. The other provinces should not—this is all about Ontario. If Premier McGuinty had leadership—and I'd support him, I'd vote for him, if he went my way, that is.

Here's the point: He should go in and say, "Look, I want to form a partnership, a consortium with the federal government, the provincial government and the AECL supply groups. Let's get this project moving, working co-operatively, sharing the liability and the innovation, and bring this in on time, on budget and make Ontario," with this vision of mine which I'm prepared to share, "the number one jurisdiction for energy."

Why is that so important? What are the provinces in this country that we envy? Danny Williams in Newfoundland and Labrador. What's the source of wealth? Energy. Then we go out to—what's his name, the new Premier in Alberta? I can't think of his name. Anyway, the Premier of Alberta—

Mr. Robert Bailey: Ed Stelmach.

Mr. John O'Toole: Stelmach. What's his base of wealth—or his former base of wealth? It's energy.

Ontario could lead the way to the own prosperity. Let's be honest about it. If this bill here, Bill 150, is about renewables—remember, I said I'd come back. If you look at the supply management report from the OPA, the Ontario Power Authority, when Jan Carr was the chief operating officer, less than 5%, if you look at a pie chart, of the total generating capacity will come from renewables. This isn't going to create anything except a lot of paperwork and very expensive energy.

I want to go through and make a couple of references here in the very short time I've been permitted. See, they're actually sort of trying to stop me getting this information out. They're trying to block—it's red tape.

There's a very good article today that I want to share with my viewers and with the members in the House. Some may have read it. Usually they just read the titles here, but this one here is a very good article. It's in the National Post, May 12. It's entitled "The Myth of the Danish Green Energy 'Miracle.'" Excellent article; I commend it to everyone. I'm going to file this with the table now. This is written by a professor of law and economics from the faculty of the University of Toronto, Michael Trebilcock. The distinguished researcher for our caucus has advised me that the Liberal McGuinty government has consulted—and Professor Trebilcock did all their work on the Legal Aid Review, so he's an independent, impartial academic professional.

What does he say? Here's the central piece of his theory, his theme: Wind power doesn't reduce CO₂

emissions. It costs consumers more and kills jobs. End of discussion. Now, you can read it but that's a summary, a précis of it.

Now, here's another one, "Candu—A 'Made-In-Ontario' Solution for a Better Environment and Jobs"—a very good article by Don MacKinnon, president of the Power Workers' Union. These people are experts. George Smitherman—great guy, he answers all the questions in an obscure sort of way, but he's not technically competent. Like, there's no possible way. So read this one by Don MacKinnon; it's excellent.

There's another good article. There are so many things, so much to say and so little time to say it. This is a really good article. It's called, "Fighting For, and Against, the Wind." We've heard from scientists, medical researchers etc. that wind is not all it's blown up to be. "Utility-scale wind energy, critics insist, is neither as green as supporters say, nor as economical."

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Solar power: What do you do when all the snow is on these panels? Do you get somebody up there to shovel them or what? You're liable to scrape the solar panels. There's a lot of talk and little action. "Hydro Rates May Soar: Critics." This is actually from the Toronto Sun. "End Green 'Dithering,' Utilities Told"; "Energy Audits Untimely."

There are articles here; here's one that's really good. It's by me, actually. It says, "Durham MPP Warns Ontarians will Pay More." These will probably be my final remarks for this afternoon, anyway. "Durham MPP John O'Toole said he is concerned that the McGuinty government's new energy policy means much higher electricity bills for Ontario homes and businesses." Why did I include business? Going back to the original in 1908, Sir Adam Beck had a vision. I'm challenging Premier McGuinty to get with the vision. Adam Beck had a saying, and Adam Beck's saying was "Power at cost." That's what his famous slogan was: "Power at cost." What he meant was power at any cost, because he built the whole economy on safe, reliable, affordable energy. That's what made Ontario great. What's driving Ontario into the ground? Ask the forestry industry. Ask the petrochemical industry. Ask all the industries—steel industries. Their biggest cost of input is energy. That's putting them out of business.

My press release goes on: "In my view"—this is my own view—"the McGuinty government's bill is basically feel-good legislation. It's bad news in terms of lasting and effective real policy and reliable, affordable energy."

"The Durham MPP, who participated in public hearings on Bill 150, the Green Energy Act, said he continues to support alternative sources of energy, including geothermal, solar and wind, but he adds that these sources need more breakthroughs in research and innovation before they can be applied to replace conventional power which is reliably priced and understood." This is too important to be trivial about.

Take up my challenge on the Candu technology. I urge Liberal members to do that. Also, in my view, look and

keep a close eye on emerging technologies: Micro-turbines, for instance, are being used in England. There's a whole array of technology. You're not taking the time to get this right. I think at the end of the day the true test of this is that energy is going to cost more in a time when the economy is already crumbling under the pressures of McGuinty's outrageous scale of taxes.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Paul Miller: I'd like to commend the member. He's very entertaining at times and is very expressive in his beliefs, and that's nice and refreshing to see. But I'll be honest with you: I can safely say that when they deregulated hydro a few years ago in the city of Stoney Creek—I was on council at the time—the government made it look like we were going to get better hydro rates. They deregulated. They privatized. Guess what? We didn't get better rates.

Now they're going to come out with this Green Energy Act. I'll be waiting once again with bated breath. I'm going to get rebates from my hydro company? Horizon Utilities is going to send me a cheque once a year for all this new energy for the grid? I have to say I don't think that's going happen. They always say, "Well, if we cut down the costs, we'll pass them on to the consumer." Baloney. They're not going to pass it on to the consumer. They never do; they never will. We'll pay more and more.

You tell me why we pay higher hydro rates in Ontario than they do in some southern states. That's unbelievable. We have Niagara Falls. We have nukes. We have everything here generating power. We sell power to the eastern seaboard. The blackout that happened a few years ago was because there was a breakdown in the system. We sell electricity to the eastern seaboard. We export more electricity than we need for our people here. It's unbelievable. They even ship electricity from northern Ontario into the grid down in southern Ontario, when communities up there are going under and the forestry people are paying hydro bills. It makes absolutely no sense to sit here and listen to this, that we're going to get lower hydro bills. Nonsense. It's not going to happen. I'll be waiting for that first cheque. After the government puts their plan in place, I'll be waiting for that big cheque coming back from Hydro for my rebate. I think I'll be waiting a long time.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Robert Bailey: I'd like to rise and comment on the member from Durham's excellent remarks, especially when he quoted from his own news releases. I know that they're beyond question, beyond—

Mr. Mike Colle: They didn't ask for the documents?

Mr. Robert Bailey: He said he's going to table those with the table. He works from a non-disclosed location. That's where he keeps all his paperwork. He's like Dick Cheney. He works from an non-disclosed location and he can't reveal where he actually prepares all this paperwork.

Mr. Mike Colle: In a bunker.

Mr. Robert Bailey: He's not in a bunker. He's Archie Bunker.

Anyway, it's great to hear his take on it. I find him always knowledgeable. No matter what the subject is, the member for Durham can go on and explain it in an erudite and concise manner. He gets his point across.

I know there's going to be more debate tomorrow on Bill 150. We look forward to that. I might even have something to say on it if they let me speak.

I've read that same article that the member was speaking about, the "Myth of the Danish Green Energy 'Miracle.'" I was going to actually use that myself. I'll have to reframe my remarks now because it looks like they've been covered.

I know down in my area in Sarnia-Lambton we're concerned because of the policy. They've talked about closing a major employer there, the Lambton generating station. I've urged OPG and the minister as well to look at some type of biomass—I know they're doing some research there themselves, OPG, at the generating station—that they could keep that plant running, keep those jobs. It would be about a \$3-million hit a year on the local economy. It's also a big taxpayer to St. Clair township, the local municipality.

For those reasons and more, I would urge that as we move forward, if Bill 150 is implemented, we look at ways of keeping that employer going.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I look forward to the rest of the debate tomorrow.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Questions and comments?

The member for Durham, you have to up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. John O'Toole: I'd like to thank the member for Hamilton East-Stoney Creek. He's paid close attention on this issue and spoke this afternoon. I read his remarks. Actually, the member from Sarnia-Lambton spoke quite wildly and wisely.

I was referring to this article myself. "Wake up, Mr. McGuinty," it says—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Okay, okay. You know the rules, member for Durham.

Mr. John O'Toole: This is a newspaper resource, but anyway I know I'm out of—

Mr. Robert Bailey: Can you table that document?

Mr. John O'Toole: I will table that document on the Lambton generating station.

But here's the real essence. This bill on the Danish experiment—and it was an experiment with green energy. "The International Energy Agency shows that the cost of residential electricity in Denmark in 2007 was" 34 cents per kilowatt hour. What are we paying today? It's 5.3 cents. Read my lips. That's six times more money. How can you vote against, on the one side—this is what I call a wedge issue. Green energy we support; 34-cent energy we don't support. We think of the people of Ontario first and foremost.

When I look at energy in Ontario, if you look at the consumption profile, 65% to 70% of the energy consumed in Ontario is consumed by industry; and if we make industry unaffordable, we're exporting jobs. This policy is failed and flawed, and is being run through this House with reckless abandon and disregard for the economy of Ontario.

I can't possibly support it on that theory and premise alone. At the same time, I want it to be remembered, in

my final remarks, that I support green energy—but not this solution.

Interjection: Green energy.

Mr. John O'Toole: Green energy forever.

Third reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): It being 6 of the clock, this House is adjourned until 9 of the clock Wednesday, May 13.

The House adjourned at 1759.

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Première session, 39^e législature

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Journal des débats (Hansard)



Wednesday 13 May 2009

Mercredi 13 mai 2009

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Président
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 13 May 2009

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 13 mai 2009

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Good morning. Please remain standing for the Lord's Prayer, followed by the Buddhist prayer.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

MINING AMENDMENT ACT, 2009

LOI DE 2009 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES MINES

Resuming the debate adjourned on May 4, 2009, on the motion for second reading of Bill 173, An Act to amend the Mining Act / Projet de loi 173, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les mines.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member for Algoma-Manitoulin.

Mr. Michael A. Brown: I'm pleased to join in second reading debate of the government's proposed Mining Act modernization legislation. We've heard from the Minister of Northern Development and Mines on the key ways in which the proposed legislation makes advances towards benefiting all Ontarians, balancing a wide range of interests and providing clear guidelines to the minerals industry. My colleague has detailed how the proposed legislation would ensure that our Mining Act reflects the values of today's Ontario, while continuing to promote sustainable mineral development stewardship for the benefit of all Ontarians.

Certainly, as we've heard, the entire province benefits from Ontario's minerals industry. Not only does the industry generate an enormous range of employment options for Ontarians; it produces the minerals that are used in virtually every aspect of our daily lives. In the minister's review of the proposed legislation now before us he has referred to the "balanced approach," which is one of this legislation's key aims. The minister spoke of promoting balanced development and modernizing the way that mining companies stake and explore their claims. It's also more respectful of private landowners in aboriginal communities—development that balances social and economic interests.

To amend the Mining Act to achieve this balance is a very complex challenge. Fortunately, the government has been working towards proposed amendments to the legislation for some time. We have not worked in isolation.

We have been involved and consulted with a wide range of stakeholders and aboriginal communities in a focused way over a period of several years, to understand how the government has arrived at this groundbreaking legislation that would first help many of our communities realize their economic and social aspirations and, second, help ensure Ontario remains one of the best places in the world for mineral exploration and mining investment.

Let me take this opportunity to provide the House with a brief review of the important initiatives, some of which the minister has touched on in his remarks, that have been undertaken for the proposed legislation before us. Our government's formal work on modernizing the Mining Act began in March 2006, when we released Ontario's mineral development strategy, a blueprint for the future of mineral development in Ontario. In fact, we could make the argument that the work began with the drafting of a mineral development strategy, providing for some of the founding elements for what we are putting forward today.

The strategy commits us to sound management, effective stewardship and responsible development of the province's mineral resources. It speaks to our concern for the environment and recognizes the need for more rigorous environmental standards. It acknowledges the need for clear rules to reduce conflicts and build collaboration at a time of increasing pressure for alternate uses of our natural resource base. And it responds to court decisions that have assisted in clarifying our obligations with respect to aboriginal treaty rights. By adopting a mineral development strategy, our government has moved to enhance the mineral sector's global competitiveness, while at the same time opening new economic opportunities for all Ontarians.

Ontario's mineral development strategy has been clear about the government's position on its obligation to consult with aboriginal peoples. It has reaffirmed our commitment to our responsibility to consult on activities related to the Mining Act.

If I could have just a minute, Mr. Speaker? The cold is really getting a bit too much.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): As long as you remain standing—is that okay?—the floor is yours. I'm just pleased I'm not in my place to catch that cold from you, that's all.

Mr. Michael A. Brown: You might get it yet, Mr. Speaker.

For the Ministry of Northern Development and Mines, it involves continued collaboration with aboriginal peo-

ples, the minerals sector and other stakeholders to develop and implement effective consultation processes. The strategy also speaks to the need to promote positive relationships with aboriginal communities. We seek to build stronger relationships between government and aboriginal peoples and to foster partnerships between aboriginal communities and the mineral sector. Ontario's mineral development strategy reinforces principles of relationship building by promoting a climate of co-operation and involvement. Its goals are to optimize resource benefit opportunities for all people and to minimize unnecessary conflicts.

One of the first things we did to move forward on the mineral development strategy was to begin an engagement process with the aim of developing an improved aboriginal consultation approach. In February 2007, our government released a discussion paper that outlined some possible approaches toward general consultation and relationship building, as well as consultation on specific projects. At the same time, to better address duty-to-consult obligations, we said that we would consider proposing Mining Act amendments. To continue productive discussion, we posted our discussion paper on the Environmental Bill of Rights and our ministry website in English, French, Cree, Ojibway and Oji-Cree. In addition, the ministry mailed copies to all First Nations and aboriginal organizations across the province. We then embarked on a campaign of outreach to both aboriginal communities and the minerals sector. We are looking for a way to work with the aboriginal communities and the mineral sector to benefit all.

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: To give our friend a bit of time, am I permitted to move my seat for a second?

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Move your seat?

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: Or move myself to another seat?

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): No. Why would you want to do that? Maybe you could explain it to us.

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am partial to the suffering of our colleague here, and consequently we'll just give him a minute to prepare himself for his continued speech.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): With the agreement of the House, we can give him—

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The crisis is over.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): That wasn't a point of order. The member may continue, if he chooses.

0910

Mr. Michael A. Brown: Thank you. I appreciate the intervention of my colleague. I think some better cold medication might be appropriate.

Back to the important matter before us: Throughout this outreach process, we engaged in more than 50 community-based dialogues in both northern and southern

Ontario. Our aboriginal engagement teams met with tribal councils and political territorial organizations across the province to set the stage for more in-depth discussions. We sought advice through the Northern Table's mining technical table process. We engaged our mineral sector stakeholders at regional workshops and presentations and at talks with individual companies.

Other workshops brought together aboriginal and mineral sector representatives in an effort to clarify their consultation-related challenges and to begin identifying options to manage or resolve these challenges. In addition, the engagement process provided opportunities for First Nations, Metis and other mineral sector players to highlight their successes, allowing others to learn from and build upon them.

Throughout this undertaking, we listened hard and learned some important things. For example, in our discussions with the aboriginal communities and organizations, we heard that there is no single, generic aboriginal view toward consultation, accommodation benefit sharing and capacity building. Aboriginal communities are all different—

Interjection.

Mr. Michael A. Brown: I'm receiving much help.

Aboriginal communities are all different, and no single approach can encompass the needs and outlooks of the more than 100 First Nations and Metis communities in Ontario. Our dialogues taught us that communities have different perspectives and understandings of mineral exploration and development. Communities need to know that they can participate in and support these activities if they choose to do so. The advice we received in our dialogues usually reflected the individual community's level of support for mineral activity.

Some communities support mineral activity. Their concerns often focused on how they can promote business relationships with mineral sector proponents and how the ministry can best support these relationships. Other communities are less ready for mineral development. They tend to focus on the impact of exploration activities. They want to know how the government, through the Ministry of Northern Development and Mines, can take a leadership role in the consultation.

Communities also differ in their preferred approach to consultation and accommodation. Some are community-based in their outlook. They believe consultation, accommodation and benefit sharing should occur at the community level and the community should have the capacity to participate effectively. Others prefer a collective approach in which the tribal council or political territorial organization assumes a coordinating role. They tend to support a two-tier approach in which First Nations benefits are also shared across the larger community.

We realize that the government's aboriginal consultation framework would have to be flexible enough to accommodate all of these differences. At the same time, it would need to ensure that basic consultation requirements are always met and that investment would continue to be encouraged.

That initial process of engaging with aboriginal communities and stakeholders about the province's mineral industries prepared the government well for the extensive and comprehensive consultation we undertook to prepare for the Mining Act modernization.

I'm just going to skip to the end. The government wishes to continue with the consultation here in the Legislature, as we do across the province, and to continue to work with all our partners to ensure a bright mineral future for all Ontarians.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: I extend my compliments to the member from Algoma-Manitoulin, the parliamentary assistant on this day. I do think he made his points rather well in the short time he took to make them. I hope he's feeling better today by seeing a doctor; we have such a good health care system in Ontario.

However, I think I'm really more interested in listening this morning to our member from Parry Sound-Muskoka, Mr. Miller, our member from the north, who has considered this to be an important move forward. But he does have, and I'm sure he will raise on our behalf, some well-considered concerns. We really understand the fundamental importance of the resource sector to our economy—that is not in dispute at all—and modernizing the Mining Act is certainly something that I heard from the association when we met with them earlier this year. So I commend the minister for moving forward.

As we all know, the clarity in property rights will fundamentally be an issue here that will have to be dealt with, moving forward. Those consultations that you often refer to are important. That being said, I believe that the deeper message—this is my own interpretation—on the issues of sovereignty and resource sharing for the First Nations is pivotal. In fact, you might argue that the federal government is still wrestling with that sovereignty issue. I know that's a big mouthful in terms of trying to get it right or get it perfect, but at least you're trying, and I think that commitment to dialogue, the commitment to working with, would certainly be our strategy. I won't make any disparaging remarks to some of the other issues in Ontario where there are ongoing disputes that are being ignored to some extent.

So I look forward to the remarks of our member from Parry Sound-Muskoka. I'm sure we'll be much more enlightened, and our critic will bring those concerns that we have to your attention this morning.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

M^{me} France Gélinas: I too want to wish the member from Algoma-Manitoulin a prompt recovery to health. I can't help but notice that our member from Timmins-James Bay and I think the member from Sudbury, as well as the member from Thunder Bay, seem to suffer from the same type of bad cold. I'm happy to say that the member from Nickel Belt so far is healthy, so maybe there are some patches of health in the north. Anyway, prompt recovery there.

As far as the comments from the member from Algoma-Manitoulin, he certainly went into some depth in describing the consultation that has taken place. This is certainly something that the New Democrats support. In order to bring a review to the Mining Act, a consultation needed to happen, and it did happen. It was exhaustive, and here we have the result in front of us.

I come from the riding of Nickel Belt. When people think about Sudbury, they think about mining, but you have to realize that there are no mines in Sudbury. The mines are all in Nickel Belt. There is a smelter operation in Sudbury and a mill related to the mining industry, but all of the mines really—and I could rhyme off a dozen of them—are located in Nickel Belt.

The Mining Act, we all agree, needed to be revamped to take into account much of the development and exploration that's going on in the far north and some of the issues with exploration in the south on private land. We agree that the act needed an update. There is some concern about what is being put forward.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: Well, it's certainly a reflection of the dedication and determination of my colleague from Algoma-Manitoulin and parliamentary assistant that he, despite not feeling well this morning, was here to make his remarks. The member for Nickel Belt is quite right: There are others who are suffering from colds as well, but northerners are tough. We just carry on. We don't give in very easily, and that's also the hallmark, may I say, of this legislation.

I am very grateful to the member for Algoma-Manitoulin for outlining in particular the extensive and quite remarkable consultation process that was undertaken with the Mining Act, and I'm also grateful for my colleagues supporting that extensive consultation process. An important part of that was that, although the formal consultations in terms of the Mining Act itself began in August last year, there was a process leading up to this, particularly with our aboriginal stakeholders, to determine the best form the consultations should take. That was also part of the mineral development strategy that our ministry put together in 2006.

So this was a tremendous process. Over 100 First Nations were involved: the Métis Nation of Ontario, the political confederacy of all the First Nations leaders in the province, the mineral industry themselves and environmental groups, all working together on a very, very close basis through what has been a complicated but, I think, a very positive process.

0920

Our challenge, as I said many times, was to find the proper balance between maintaining a positive investment climate, being properly respectful of our aboriginal partners and recognizing the need to improve situations for private landholders. I think we accomplished that and I'm grateful to the member from Algoma-Manitoulin for outlining that today.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

The hardy member from Algoma-Manitoulin, you have two minutes to respond.

Mr. Michael A. Brown: I first want to thank all the members for their advice on cold medications that I received in the interim and their best wishes for my speedy recovery. I would point out that many of us do seem to have a cold that came from northern Ontario. I don't think it's specifically about being in the north, but who knows?

This is an important piece of legislation. I appreciate the comments from the member from Durham, the member for Nickel Belt and the minister himself. It is a difficult piece of legislation which required an extensive amount of consultation with groups involved in the aboriginal communities, whether First Nations or others. It required a great deal of work with ministry stakeholders, whether they be prospectors, mining companies or junior companies, and with all Ontarians.

To get a piece of legislation that finds the correct balance between the interests of all of us is a tremendously difficult challenge for any government to undertake. I'm very proud of the consultation that the ministry did undertake throughout the entire province with all the stakeholders trying to understand the new and modern approach that we need to take to developing our mineral sector in a sustainable way. It is clearly a key to Ontario's prosperity. As I mentioned in the speech, we use minerals in virtually every product we use today, whether it be nickel from Sudbury or any of the other minerals we have—salt; you name it, we use it. We produce much of it here in Ontario. We need it and we need to have those benefits for all the people of Ontario.

Thank you to my colleagues for all their advice on cold medication.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate.

Mr. Norm Miller: It's my pleasure this morning to get an opportunity to comment on Bill 173, the Mining Amendment Act, 2009. I'd like to start out my comments by simply saying that I recognize and the PC Party recognizes just how important mining is to the province of Ontario. Mineral production in 2008 was some \$9.6 billion. Toronto is certainly a centre for mine financing capital: 57% of the world's mining companies are listed on the Toronto Stock Exchange. Mining is important for development of the far north, for sure. It's one of the opportunities for economic activity in the far north. It's important for jobs in the south, as well.

I think back to just a couple years ago. I had the pleasure of touring the new mine being developed in Sudbury, the Nickel Rim mine, with our past leader, John Tory. When I was touring that mine, they had spent about \$1 billion at that stage sinking the shaft down into the ground a considerable distance, and the mine hadn't started producing yet. But when we were touring the property and looking at the various equipment being installed in the mine, it was pointed out that most of it came from southern Ontario and was produced in the Toronto area and various places in southern Ontario, whether it was

the big winches—all kinds of different pieces of equipment. There's obviously a real importance of mining for the economy of southern Ontario, not just the north and not just the far north.

Of course, mining is very important for aboriginal communities. In fact, mining is the biggest employer for aboriginal communities. It's quite significant. They're high-paying jobs and jobs that require a lot of skill, so it provides opportunity for aboriginal communities. The newly opened diamond mine in Attawapiskat is a mine that is employing many of the people in the Attawapiskat neighbourhood, and First Nations people, so that's a positive thing.

But there are also conflicts in mining. Those sorts of conflicts are, in southern Ontario, between surface property owners who don't have ownership of the mineral rights, where the crown still owns the mineral rights. There have been some conflicts, particularly in eastern Ontario. And of course there are concerns about the environmental effect of mining as well.

I note that the government has done a pretty good job of getting the major stakeholders onside in terms of supporting the provisions of this legislation. They have groups like the Ontario Mining Association, and Chris Hodgson. They have the head of the prospectors' association making positive comments about the changes proposed. They have some environmental groups supporting the legislation, and some of the aboriginal groups. Grand Chief John Beaucage, of Anishinabek First Nation, and Regional Chief Angus Toulouse were also making supportive comments.

I would say that I'm generally supportive of what is being proposed in the modernization of the Mining Act, but it is my job as the opposition to point out those that are not 100% supportive of the proposed changes, and also to make suggestions for improvement to the Mining Act. So I will try to get on the record some of the concerns that have been raised with me, as the northern development and mines critic.

It has been 100 years since the Mining Act was first introduced in this Legislature. Much of the proposed act enables processes that will be detailed in regulation, which will be developed in the next few years. Those provisions deal with map staking, prospecting licences, staking claims, regional division for claims and dispute resolution with First Nations. In other words, some major parts, pretty significant aspects of this legislation, will be decided in regulation.

We've heard about the consultation that has gone forward to this point, where they say a thousand people have been involved and many First Nations. I would say generally, from what I've heard, the consultation has been quite significant. I just say to the government that, going forward, it's probably more important, because so much of this bill is being left to regulations, that they do that same sort of open consultation in terms of the regulations. Otherwise, it could be good or it might be an absolute disaster.

Obviously, and understandably, the act was due for some changes, as times have changed. I'd like to now

look at a little bit of history. In Ontario, over the last 10 years, there have been some pretty drastic changes. Ontario was the engine of the economy of Canada 10 years ago. Now we're in last place. Ontario was first in the world for mining activity and it can no longer make that claim.

So what has changed? Well, to start with, the attitude of the government has changed. For example, under the PC government, Ontario created a positive climate for resource development. In February 1999, Northern Development and Mines Minister Tim Hudak received recommendations of the Mining Standards Task Force, a joint committee of the Ontario Securities Commission and the Toronto Stock Exchange. As a result, the PC government brought Ontario's geoscientists under a system of licensure that set out professional standards establishing a self-regulating body for geoscientists, to ensure that the information that was coming forward was accurate, reliable and reviewed by professionals.

In 2000, Ontario's mining sector contributed some \$5 billion annually to the province's economy and sustained hundreds of communities across the province, particularly in northern Ontario.

Some 40% of the world's mineral capital was raised right here in the province of Ontario. The PC government of the day brought in programs like Operation Treasure Hunt, a record investment in geophysical and geochemical survey.

In the budget for 2000, we cut the Ontario mining tax rate in half, to make it the lowest tax rate in all of Canada. For new remote mines opening up in the province, the government created a 10-year tax holiday, and then a further reduction in the tax rate after that, to spur economic investment in the area. I would say that it had a lot to do with stimulating prospecting in the far north, and it is probably why we have a diamond mine west of Attawapiskat now.

0930

As well, the PC government brought in an Ontario-focused flow-through share program to spur investment in grassroots prospecting and development, a move that spurred the federal government of the day to act on that initiative as well. These programs worked.

Let's take a look at the economic climate under the current government relative to mining. In March 2007, in the Liberal budget, Premier McGuinty announced he would impose a tax of up to 13% on profits generated by Ontario diamond mines. At that point we didn't have a diamond mine, but we had one just about ready to open. The minister has talked a lot about certainty. I agree, certainty is a good thing; certainty for companies that are going to invest billions of dollars to develop a new mine. They want to know that after they've spent the money searching for the mine, finding it, developing it and going through the process, the rules won't change. Unfortunately, the rules did change.

De Beers spent \$1 billion developing this new diamond mine west of Attawapiskat, with lots of engagement with the First Nations, impact benefit agreements,

getting ready to open the mine, and then all of a sudden the provincial government changed the rules: It tripled the tax rate. I simply say that is not fair. I know that at about that time the Ontario Mining Association was having its annual Meet the Miners reception here at Queen's Park. They feature a different company each year, and it just so happened that that year they were featuring De Beers. They had some of the beautiful diamonds, the best in the world, that come from Ontario's north, on display there, but the representatives of De Beers just could not—they were trying to be polite, but they couldn't help but criticize the government for changing the rules just as they were about to open the mine. I think that's understandable, because certainty is something that the mining industry requires.

A 2005 Fraser Institute report on investment attractiveness of mining jurisdictions states that the key problem facing mining is uncertainty. The government has consistently signalled uncertainty to the mining community, and we have seen the results. Your Mining Act review has been under way for several years now, yet this act creates only a rough framework, with the detail to be happening in regulations. Depending on which aspect of the regulations we're talking about, it will be at least a couple of more years—up to five, I would say—before the regulations are drafted, reviewed, refined and in place.

On the map staking side, we're talking about a process that will take two to five years at a minimum, and it will be particularly challenging in the far north to implement.

What is the effect of the uncertain policies and regulations created by the McGuinty government? Well, let's see. We'll go back to December 27, 2001, and I'll read a press release of the day from the Ministry of Northern Development and Mines.

"Ontario Soars to Top Ranking as World's Best Destination for Mineral Investment"

"Ontario's hard work in support of the minerals sector has paid off in the form of a top-place finish in the Fraser Institute Annual Survey of Mining Companies, Northern Development and Mines minister Dan Newman said today. Ontario shared the spotlight with Quebec for the highest rank on the institute's overall investment attractiveness index.

"I am delighted with our province's showing," said Newman. "This is a ringing endorsement from the mining industry for the Ontario government's efforts to build a favourable economic and regulatory climate that will nurture a strong, sustainable, environmentally sound minerals industry today and in the future."

"Released December 18, the Fraser Institute's fifth annual Survey of Mining Companies interviewed 162 companies to assess mining jurisdictions in Canada, the US and other countries on their mineral exploration investment attractiveness. The ranking is achieved by comparing policy, regulatory and mineral potential factors that influence investment decisions.

"Both Ontario and Quebec scored 90 points out of a possible 100 in the 2001-02 survey. The other top 10

mineral investment jurisdictions were Australia, Chile, Brazil, Nevada, Alaska, Peru, Mexico and Manitoba.

"Last year, Ontario was rated as the best jurisdiction in Canada and third in the world for mineral potential and investment attractiveness.

"Newman attributed Ontario's improved international ranking to a series of significant policy and regulatory measures that make the province more attractive for mining and mineral exploration. Over the past six years, the government has cut taxes, initiated one of Canada's most aggressive geoscience survey programs, funded mineral exploration research, reduced red tape and supported the activities of prospectors.

"These positive measures have made Ontario a great place to do mineral sector business," said Newman. "We look forward to continue working with the industry to foster economic growth and job creation in the mineral exploration sector."

That was back on December 27, 2001, when Ontario was the number one in the world, tied with Quebec. Quebec is still in that number one position; however, Ontario is now sadly in 10th position. First to 10th is what has happened under this government.

What are some of the other negative impacts on mining development? According to the Canadian mining association, while global mineral prices are "a primary driver of investment, it is important to note that the industry does face a number of challenges...."

"... a present and projected shortage of labour—skilled and unskilled....

"Project approval times and costs are increasing and the industry faces cumbersome consultation and regulatory processes. Parallel issues, such as unresolved land claims, can add to these costs and delays."

While the government is proposing a dispute resolution process in this legislation, there is no detail available and no idea what time lines will be attached to this process; therefore, there is still no certainty for industry to encourage further investment.

I can tell you that in getting ready to speak today, I called the president of one of the major companies based here in Toronto—I won't name it—to get their feelings about the Mining Act, and they gave me some input. They also said they are investing in countries other than Canada right now. They pointed out to me that they just developed a mine in Russia. You'd think Russia wouldn't be the most stable place to invest; however, this president pointed out that they are looking for investment, and it took them three years to go from prospect to actually having an operating mine in Russia, whereas it takes about 10 years here.

The other point this president brought up with me was the tax rates for investment in mining in Canada not being as competitive, and I'll get to that in a second.

While several other variables affect the competitiveness of an investment regime, members of the Mining Association of Canada identified three as being particularly important:

"Tax Policies

"Government tax policies should support a competitive and internationally active industry."

When you combine provincial and federal taxes in Ontario, we are less competitive than Brazil and Chile, who are two of our major international competitors for mining investment.

"Investment in Infrastructure...."

Ports, railways, highways and international bridges are required to be able to "reach global markets with competitively priced" goods.

"In rail services, for example, the industry contributes a significant percentage of the freight revenues of CN and CP each year. These two railroads enjoy a monopoly position in many regions and it is therefore very important that rail services be efficient and fairly priced."

In northern Ontario, "there is also a need for increased investment in transportation infrastructure to support economic development.... There is considerable mining potential in northern" Ontario, "where the interest of analysts and investors can be affected by the efficiency with which products can be moved in and out of prospective mine sites."

Their third concern: "Efficiency and Effectiveness of Canadian regulations

"In proposing projects, Canadian mining companies and domestic and foreign investors depend on" all levels of government "for a clear understanding of information requirements, approval processes, timetables and responsibilities."

Once again, this comes back to certainty, which I know the minister has spoken about.

Let's delve a little deeper into the issue of regulations. In Ontario, we already have examples of this government creating regulatory challenges. We need only to go back to the Endangered Species Act. I at that point was the Ministry of Natural Resources critic and did get to have input to that.

Throughout the legislative process, the Minister of Natural Resources and his government promised to recognize the Crown Forest Sustainability Act and honour the forest management plans that are Ontario's platinum standard and recognized as one of the most rigorous forest management frameworks in the world. I believe the minister was surprised when the government broke its word on that, because section 55 of the Endangered Species Act was not an exemption from forest sector responsibilities to protect species at risk or their habitat; it was an exemption from duplication of process. But this government didn't care about breaking its promise to the forestry sector or the 230,000 working families that depend upon it. As the Ontario Forest Industry Association president and CEO Jamie Lim points out, this government instead moved to create a crippling process that further brought the forest industry to its knees.

0940

This is just another situation where the devil is in the details and where we have to trust the government to keep its word, because much of what this current Mining Act is about is going to be in the regulations. Frankly,

based on the track record to do with the Endangered Species Act, I just don't trust the government.

One of the changes proposed in the new Mining Act is a switch from ground staking, where you're physically on the ground, to map staking, where the staking is basically done from an office, based on a computer. That's the way many jurisdictions are going. Just to explain traditional staking, I at one point in my life did actually hold a prospector's licence. That was back in 1980, when—

Hon. Michael Gravelle: You were a child.

Mr. Norm Miller: —the minister says I was a child; yes, thank you for that—but when my good friend John Moses happened to be interested in prospecting and he needed another person to help him stake some claims. So in April 1980, I got my prospector's licence. There were a group of claims that were lapsing and coming open on April 1, 1980, I believe it was. So I was out in the bush at about 5 in the morning, ready for when they came open at 6:01 on April 1. I had snowshoes and had snowshoed out, and actually staked six claims for my friend and then promptly signed them over to him afterwards.

But the ground staking process is such that you physically go on the ground. So as I say, in this case I snowshoed out into the bush. Each claim is a quarter-mile-square claim. As I recall, and I might have the corner wrong, you have to cut down a tree on the northeast corner of the claim, I think it is, and you square it off and put your brass prospector plate on. You write your name on it with your prospector's licence and the times; it was like 6:15 a.m. on April 1. The six I did that day were staked by me. That's the way ground staking works: You physically have to go out on the ground and do the staking. And then, to keep the claim up, you have to do a fair amount of line cutting, marking the boundaries of the quarter-mile-square claim and other work, or it would lapse, as these claims had lapsed.

So the proposed change is to go to map staking, and I think there are prospectors, certainly, who have concerns about that. I'll try to get some of their concerns on the record.

I would like to share some comments from an ad hoc committee that was formed by the Prospectors and Developers Association of Canada. They point out that map staking will have a negative impact on stakers and line cutters. Fees for recording map stake claims will go to general revenue, with no benefit to either local stakers, communities or the mines ministry.

They point out that there are important benefits of physical staking in unsurveyed country, such as that there are usually claim lines and posts to enable one to find the claim. In areas of continuing exploration activity, many people earn a significant part of their income by staking claims. These people are also usually involved in the exploration sector at other stages, such as line cutting and prospecting. If they were to lose that part of their income earned by staking, they might get out of the industry entirely.

Map staking is much less conducive to identifying potential environmental hazards on the ground, and there-

fore the likelihood of acquiring a property with a potential environmental problem is increased, because with map staking, as I mentioned, as we move to that, you do that in your office via computer. You're not actually physically out there on the ground.

Ground staking puts people on the ground who establish a physical boundary and often gain valuable information about the geology, ground conditions etc. Ground staking also puts a constraint on the acquisition of huge tracts of land by one party. Map staking, the new proposed type of staking, can sterilize a large area very quickly, leaving most of the ground unexplored, but held by the transfer of work from small, key areas. Those are some concerns that were expressed by stakeholders, prospectors—and I do have some other prospectors that I will get to in just a second.

Other stakeholders: As I mentioned, there aren't a number of First Nations that support the proposed changes to the bill. The Nishnawbe Aski Nation has some concerns. I note that Stan Beardy, the Grand Chief, has issued a statement, and I would like to get that on the record.

“Grand Chief Stan Beardy acknowledges the attempts the government of Ontario has made to address First Nations concerns over mining in the Mining Act amendment bill introduced by the government of Ontario today, but is very concerned that the legislation might not fully recognize the rights of First Nations to decide on mining in NAN territory.

“Our primary concern is that NAN First Nations must have free, prior and informed consent before any activity can take place in their homelands,” said Nishnawbe Aski Nation (NAN) Grand Chief Stan Beardy. ‘That’s the standard expressed in article 32 of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, and that’s the standard we expect Ontario to meet.’

“Some key areas NAN First Nations want addressed in the amended legislation include:

“(1) Free prior informed consent: No prospecting, staking, exploration or mine development will proceed without a written agreement in place, at the discretion of the First Nation.

“(2) Participation in regulations: All regulations under the new act must be made in consultation with First Nations in a government-to-government relationship.

“(3) Spirit and intent of the treaties (No. 9 and No. 5): These agreements to live and work together will be recognized by any person exercising authority under the act.

“(4) Environmental standards: The land, water, air and all living things must be protected—by the highest environmental standards with all exploration and development projects subject to the scrutiny of environmental assessments.

“(5) Dispute resolution: An independent dispute resolution mechanism involving NAN Nation communities that respects the values and laws of First Nations people.

“(6) Funding and capacity: A firm commitment to funding and technical resources to engage and respond to the project assessment process.

“(7) Land use planning: An assurance that new legislation does not pre-empt the current process, that land use plans take precedence over mining rights, and clear indication that land use plans will be respected, and will not be trumped by mining tenure.

“(8) Map staking and land designations: A commitment that consultation and accommodation obligations will be met and that capacity and technology will be provided to First Nations who want to participate.

“NAN has requested a commitment from the government of Ontario to a process that will see more meaningful participation by First Nations during the regulation and policy stages; detailed work that will be conducted following the implementation of the Mining Act amendment bill.

“‘The government of Ontario did not allow enough time to conduct meaningful consultation with NAN First Nations in the development of this legislation,’ said Beardy. ‘We will continue to insist upon a mechanism through which NAN First Nations will be consulted and will have meaningful input into the decision-making process.’

“‘We have a sacred responsibility to future generations to secure the protection of our homelands, which has been the basis of the survival of the people of Nishnawbe Aski for generations,’ said Beardy. ‘It is critical that any development of natural resources in the far north must respect aboriginal and treaty rights while supporting an environmentally sustainable economic future for our people.’

“Nishnawbe Aski Nation is a political territorial organization representing 49 First Nation communities in James Bay Treaty 9 and Ontario portions of Treaty 5—an area covering two thirds of the province of Ontario.”

Mr. Beardy’s speaking for the First Nations in a significant land mass part of Ontario, so I do think his concerns are to be noted.

As a sidebar, I had the pleasure of going with Grand Chief Stan Beardy on a flight late last August, once again, with our past leader John Tory. We visited Fort Severn, which is up on the Hudson Bay coast. As well, on the return trip—we had chartered a plane out of Thunder Bay to make this trip—we visited Webequie. I mention Webequie because, I guess, it’s a community that’s doing very well, and mining is making a real difference in the welfare of that community. They’re in the midst of what’s called “the ring of fire,” so there is all sorts of economic activity, diamond drilling, going on in the area surrounding Webequie. The chief was Scott Jacob. I understand that he wasn’t successful in the last election, but he was the chief who was there when I toured last fall. I think they have a joint venture with a diamond drilling company called Cyr, and it’s really providing some benefits for that community. It’s an example of how mining can benefit First Nations communities, but obviously they do have concerns.

0950

As I mentioned, John Beaucage from the Union of Ontario Indians called the legislation historic for marking

a new way of doing things. He went on to say, “However, we have to move beyond basic consultation towards engagement and signing of impact benefit agreements between mining companies and First Nations.”

I have spoken with some individual prospectors, as well, who have outlined their specific concerns. I spoke with Bill MacRae up in Timmins recently and he outlined—these are second-hand, so I hope I get his concerns correct.

He had concerns about provisions in the bill that allow companies to pay money instead of doing assessment work after a claim is staked. For example, after a claim is staked by a prospector in the future via map staking, there’s currently a requirement to maintain that claim; that you have to do certain work, whether it’s line cutting or geophysical work. The bill will change that, where a company will just be able to pay money to maintain that claim. The money would go to the government, so obviously the government benefits. But that’s money that’s not going into work on the ground, so the prospectors won’t be benefiting from it, plus you aren’t getting the benefit of the work that would be done on the ground. He has concerns about that. He would like to make sure that the value is set high enough that there’s still incentive to actually do the work versus just paying the fee.

He had concerns about the exploration permits, because there’s going to be this new process put in place that, as more work is done, you require more complex permits. To do with flexibility, the example he gave me was if the permits and the plan you have to put forward is very detailed in terms of exactly where you’re going to do diamond drilling, it could actually be negative, in that you might drill the first hole and have a very significant ore intersection and that would change where you want to do the next three or four holes, and if your plan is so restrictive that you can’t make that change, he had concerns about that.

He also had concerns about uncertainty being created, wondering about timelines, wondering about whether the First Nations would have the capacity to deal with the new consultation requirements.

His fourth concern was just around the uncertainty in the period from when the bill passes, which I expect will be in the fall session of the Legislature, through to the point when all the regulations are actually finalized, which could be a couple of years at best and could indeed be longer—but I would expect it’s going to be a couple of years.

Finally, the request that was made to me was that when this bill goes to committee, which I expect is going to be some time over the summer, places in the north be on the map, included for destinations for the committee to hold hearings. He very specifically said that Timmins should be a place where committee hearings are held, and I would think that Sudbury would be a natural spot as well.

I also had a number of suggestions that were passed on to me by another prospector, and I will try to outline some of those concerns as best I can. They had concerns

about the prospector licence. There's going to be a requirement in this bill for awareness training. He said that the reaction they had at their prospectors' meeting was that a lot of the prospectors thought they were going to quit prospecting if they had to do an awareness training course. So I would simply say that the way this is implemented might be critical, so that we don't lose prospectors in this province, for one thing. I would suggest that perhaps some of the prospectors who have been prospecting a long time might be grandfathered, or that they come up with a method where—he suggested that you mail out the course or requirements to all of the prospectors and perhaps they can do a self-paced course.

I'm a pilot, and in flying you have to maintain currency. The Canadian Owners and Pilots' Association mails out to people the required re-currency training course, which you can complete in your own time and then keep in your logbook to show that you've done the currency training. Perhaps that would be a way of getting compliance for the prospectors out there.

The new section of the bill to do with surface rights—it was just expressed to me from the prospector. They don't like it, but it's not too big a deal for them. They do have concerns with cash in lieu of work, as I previously mentioned from the other prospector I was speaking with. On the map staking question, they actually had a vote amongst the prospector association and the majority of the prospectors voted that they preferred ground staking to map-staking. They're concerned about employment and want a level playing field, and there certainly are mixed feelings about that. They've brought up the director of exploration who's being proposed and simply said, "He'd better know his stuff."

Advanced exploration: They felt that it should be the government's responsibility to consult with First Nations and not the individual companies. It was pointed out to me that there is a model in Quebec where they actually have revenue resource sharing for First Nations based on mining activity. This actually incents the First Nations to want to have mining happening and encourages them to be involved and also encourages a time line, I guess you would say, through that model. It was pointed out to me from the prospector that if he's looking at doing something in a given area, there might be six different First Nations that he'd have to consult with and it's a very difficult process.

Those were some of the concerns expressed to me from a particular prospector. Sorry; to go on a little bit more—the powers of the inspector. They don't like the section where—and I will read this section:

"158(1) For the purpose of carrying out his or her powers and duties under this act, an inspector may, without warrant, at any reasonable time, gather information and make inspections and inquiries and, in the exercise of that authority, may,

"(a) enter into or onto any place, mining lands or other lands or premises connected or associated with any staking, exploration activity, mine, advanced exploration project, abandoned mine or mine hazard, other than a room or place actually used as a dwelling;

"(b) make such inspections, examinations, inquiries, tests or photographic or other record considered necessary in carrying out his or her duties...."

It's the "without warrant" part which I think they don't like. He did raise in conversation with me just the general attitude of government inspectors. I've certainly raised this—not just connected with the Mining Act—but how I feel that we in this province need to change the attitude of inspectors so they aren't so much just the police but they're actually assisting people and businesses to meet the regulations versus only being the police. I think we need to, as I've said in the past, make the rules clear, educate the people that they're going to affect and then have our inspectors actually provide some assistance to meet those rules versus the attitude of just coming down hard with a hammer and being the police.

On the far north planning section, where there is a plan in this act to have community-based land use planning, the concern expressed by the prospectors was that this may take many years. They're just concerned about timelines and how long it will take to actually be put in place.

Another noteworthy stakeholder: The Canadian Mining Journal's online poll gives an insight into other stakeholder reaction. Only 5% of poll participants wholeheartedly support the proposed changes to the Ontario Mining Act, 41% support a few of the changes, and 41% don't support the legislation at all.

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There's another group that is looking for changes on the other side of the spectrum and that is the Coalition for Balanced Mining Act Reform. Dave Gill, whom I spoke with the other day, sent me information which I—it looks like I should have time, hopefully, to get onto the record. I'll read what they're saying:

"The Act to Amend the Mining Act of Ontario, Ontario's Bill 173 to amend the Mining Act is both unbalanced and unjust.

"The proposals that Minister Michael Gravelle has made to change Ontario's Mining Act will not bring Ontario's Mining Act into balance with other policies and priorities; with other legislation of the province, and with the rights and needs of the citizens of the province. Bill 173 fails to respect even the most basic requirements of equality, fairness and justice, and it will not bring peace to the province on mining matters. The Coalition for Balanced Mining Act Reform ... is a broad coalition of citizens' groups, environmental authorities and municipal governments that has made three modest proposals to bring mining into balance with the rights and needs of Ontarians and with other priorities and policies of the province and its citizens.

"Those three modest proposals call on the government to overcome the serious negative effects that are caused by Ontario's overly permissive mining legislation by:

"(1) protecting all private landowners—equally;

"(2) allowing municipal planning procedures to determine where mining activities can take place with their local communities; and

“(3) requiring all mineral exploration activities to undergo a comprehensive impact analysis before the work is done, and to preclude mining activities if that analysis shows that the work will damage the environment or the economy or harm the rights, the health, the investments, or the jobs of other citizens of the province.

“Not one of those essential requirements is met by Bill 173.

“Thus the bill would continue to allow mining activities to cause immense damage: it would not bring mining into balance; and it would not stop the conflicts caused by mining legislation that is overwhelmingly biased towards the interests of mining firms. Instead, the bill proposes to make a few trivial changes, for example by requiring some consultation with some groups, by preventing claim staking on some private lands, and by requiring prospectors to take some ‘awareness training’ before they can enter onto public and private land, lay claim to the minerals, and proceed with invasive exploration activities including cutting the trees, and doing exploratory trenching and drilling.”

He goes on, but obviously those three provisions are the key ones that the Coalition for Balanced Mining Act Reform are concerned about. To demonstrate why there is not unanimous support for the bill and for the process we go through, it will be important that they too get a chance to come to committee and make their suggestions known about this bill.

In the limited time I have left: It’s obvious in the bill that the regulations are going to be critical. I would just like to go through a few more aspects of it.

Certainly, as it was pointed out, there was a lot of consultation in the drafting of the bill. I give the government credit for that. They had 1,000 people participate in public and stakeholder consultations and 200 written responses, and the feedback I have is that that was positive. But as I mentioned, so many of the details are going to be in the regulations that it’s very important that that process continues.

Just to highlight some aspects of the bill: There’s going to be map staking introduced; I’ve already talked about that. There’s going to be a graduated regulatory approach for exploration activity. There’s recognition of aboriginal treaty rights. There’s a dispute resolution process as it regards to aboriginal concerns. Although, when I was being briefed on the bill and I asked specifically about the distribute resolution process, asking how it was going to work, I was more or less told, “We’re not quite sure yet. We’re going to figure that out over the next couple of years.” That’s a pretty significant part of the bill that needs to be worked out, and that’s why I keep coming back to regulations.

The bill deals with a mainly southern Ontario problem or situation: the conflict of private right interests relating to mining development and mineral rights versus surface rights. It also changes land use planning in Ontario’s far north so that community-based land use planning will be required.

Maybe I’ll go to the surface rights versus mining rights part of it. It’s interesting that in this bill there are

going to be different rules for southern Ontario versus northern Ontario. The boundaries of the south versus the north that are being used for this particular legislation are the French River, Lake Nipissing and Mattawa River. North of that is northern Ontario and south of that is southern Ontario. It’s interesting that, speaking for my own riding’s sake, Parry Sound is in the north for most northern programs but it isn’t in the north in terms of the new Mining Act.

This relates mainly to the conflict of private surface rights versus crown mineral rights, because in the south the conflict has been, particularly in eastern Ontario, where cottage owners, for example, think they own all the property, including mineral rights, but discover after a claim is being staked that they actually don’t. So in this bill, in southern Ontario the mining rights that are owned by the crown would be withdrawn from mineral staking automatically. That is in the case where there is not an existing claim, or if a claim lapses, then it will be withdrawn automatically. In northern Ontario, it’s kind of the reverse of that. In northern Ontario, owners would be able to apply to the minister for an order to withdraw the mining rights from staking. I think that will be positively looked at by those people caught in the situation in southern Ontario where they didn’t realize that they don’t own the mineral rights and where they find that they’re in the midst of a mining claim. It’s not so much an issue in northern Ontario where there’s just a lot less development.

The far north land use planning that’s going to be required in this bill: I view that positively from the perspective of what the McGuire government has said, that they’re not going to allow any development in the boreal forest. They will allow mining in the far north if there’s land use planning going forward, and I assume community land use planning. I assume that the First Nations will be the drivers of that community land use planning, and I view that as a positive way for the communities to benefit from economic development and the possibility of a mine being created, and them having some say over it as well. I think that is positive as long as, in all this, the process that’s being put in with the permits etc.—as long as there are significant timelines so that it doesn’t just become a very, very long process which will create uncertainty in development. I think community land use planning can be a positive thing. It can be positive for those far north communities.

I know there are other provisions and I’m going to take some time to try to talk about them also. Another provision of this bill, and I know it was raised by Chris Hodgson, the president of the Ontario Mining Association, is the fact that the penalties for non-compliance have changed significantly, so there’s now actually a part of it which is an imprisonment clause for a couple of violations of the act. It was stated to me that that would certainly get the company’s attention and that they would want to be in compliance with the laws so that they are not obviously faced with that prospect of prison time. That is another significant change in the bill.

Interjection.

Mr. Norm Miller: The minister was saying something I didn't quite catch.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: I want to be able to comment—

Mr. Norm Miller: He wants to be able to comment. Okay. Well, I look forward to that, because I'm just about out of time.

I will wrap up, then. There are some other specific, smaller details that I did want to mention, but I'll give the minister an opportunity to comment. I would simply reiterate that regulations are going to be key to this. It could be a disaster or it could be positive, depending on how those regulations are implemented. Full consultation on that going forward will be important and we look forward to significant committee hearings travelling around the province, particularly in the north, and real input from those committee hearings.

With that, I will conclude my comments.

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The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

M^{me} France Gélinas: It was most interesting to listen this morning to comments on the changes to the Mining Amendment Act. Certainly the member was able to touch on some of the core and key issues of what the bill is trying to do. The bill is trying to bring a level of certainty when dealing with exploration, or any other mining activity, on traditional First Nations land.

His reading into the record of the letter that Chief Beardy from the Nishnawbe Aski Nation sent, following the release of the bill, speaks volumes. The First Nations want to see amendments to the act. They want to see certainty for them for revenue sharing when there is mining exploration and mining activity going on in their territories. They also want to see land use planning. The bill does not go into any certainty on those critical aspects for First Nations.

He also talked about another area of the bill that is very contentious, which is this great south-north divide, where a different set of rules will apply to land use in southern Ontario versus northern Ontario. For him especially, it's sort of interesting that he's not in the north anymore and is now part of the south. So certainly this is something that I will be going into in further detail when it's my turn to talk about the bill.

Generally, there is a consensus out there that the Mining Act needs to be revamped. The actors have been identified. Not all of them are happy.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: I do want to compliment the member for Parry Sound-Muskoka, the critic for our ministry. Certainly he put a lot of effort into the comments, and I appreciate them.

But I do think, when you look at the large extent of his remarks in terms of outlining some of the concerns expressed by various stakeholders and interested people, it only shows us what a challenge it is to find the balance. That's what it really does reflect, in a very clear way. So

indeed, I appreciate it, and I will follow up specifically on some of the cases or issues he mentioned, because I think we can clarify those rather quickly.

But you're certainly right about the drafting of the regulations. They are going to be a lot of work, and they are very significant. I must say that we don't anticipate them taking nearly the amount of time that you suggested they will. We also believe that as we go through certain aspects of it, they will become part of the act immediately. In other words, we'll do it in sections. But our goal is to move forward on this in a good way.

And may I say we are very committed to having the process of drafting of regulations be a consultation process as well. We've made a very clear commitment—in fact, a written commitment—to our aboriginal stakeholders, that they indeed will be part of that process. I was speaking earlier this morning at a mining industry breakfast and made the same comments and commitment to them.

I think that the important thing is that we are now, generally speaking, on a very positive track. Despite some of the concerns—I wish I had more time to talk about the map-staking issue, because I think that there are some very positive ways of looking at the process as we move forward.

Thank you very much. I appreciate your comments, as I do those from all the members. We're going to work very closely and together on this as we move forward in the process of drafting the regulations. I recognize how important it is. Again, I look forward to working with all my colleagues in the House.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: I listened to, and in fact I had to leave the room and watch, the remarks by the member from Parry Sound-Muskoka. It's reassuring to see that both the Minister of Northern Development and Mines and the parliamentary assistant are here this morning to take note of the comments and observations made by Mr. Miller, because I know that he also takes the time to try and find that balance.

We, on the one side, are completely in support not just of modernizing and improving, if you will, the relationship component of this legislation, with all the stakeholders, but also of getting it right. We remain very concerned, as Mr. Miller pointed out, about the regulations. The devil is in the details, and this is where we're troubled. The history here, working not with this particular minister but with other ministries—I think of the Ministry of the Environment in the regulations with respect to the cosmetic pesticide act, which was sort of bumping up against the federal PMRA, the pesticide management regulatory authority. So we have the province, on the one hand, making up these fancy regulations which really don't work, from my understanding, in many cases, with the federal agency which regulates what comes into and out of the country and between jurisdictions. So we want to get the regulations proper and correct.

But I always think of the simple things in terms of that challenging of the balance. I think the comments made with respect to the stability are also important. When there's heavy investment—and we know the case of the Attawapiskat diamond mine and changing the rules in the middle of the game, adding a new tax or some regulatory burden or secondary oversight—I remain concerned that this does not provide the stable framework that a long-term investment relationship requires to, again, bring Ontario from 10th back to first place.

That's what we're looking for: the right rules at the right time in the right place, to make Ontario the best place to do business and create jobs and wealth.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Howard Hampton: I was interested to hear my colleague from the Conservative Party, and I was particularly interested to hear him read from the statements of NAN First Nations and point out that while the government was patting itself on the back when it held its press conference here at Queen's Park and when it introduced the legislation here at Queen's Park, it was very clear that where the majority of mining exploration is taking place in Ontario and where the majority of mining interests in Ontario exist, the very people who live there, NAN First Nations and their political representatives, were not at the press conference. In fact, they issued a statement to the media indicating their dissatisfaction, indicating their disappointment.

I think that's a very salient point that my colleague from the Conservative Party has pointed out for the government, because I think we need to be clear: The mining interest isn't in Toronto; the mining interest isn't in Hamilton; the mining interest isn't in London. The mining interest is north of the 51st parallel in northern Ontario. The mining interest is in a part of Ontario where the vast majority of people who live there belong to the NAN First Nations. I think it is very telling that not only did the legislation that has been presented not satisfy NAN First Nations; it very much disappointed NAN First Nations. I'll have more to say on that in a moment.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for Parry Sound–Muskoka, you have two minutes to respond.

Mr. Norm Miller: I thank the Minister of Northern Development and Mines and the members from Nickel Belt, Kenora–Rainy River and Durham for their comments.

I would like to, in my couple of minutes here—one aspect of the bill I didn't really talk about too much is that they're bringing in a graduated regulatory approach for exploration so that plans will be required for low-impact exploration, and permits for higher-impact exploration. I say, as with other aspects of the bill, this could be a good thing if it's done in a reasonable timeline and adds certainty, or it could be a negative thing if it becomes mired in bureaucracy and is a very slow process. So that's another example of how the regulations will be so important.

The point the member from Kenora–Rainy River makes certainly is important, that two thirds of the land mass of the province is under the Nishnawbe Aski Nation and Grand Chief Stan Beardsley, who have an interest in it, certainly. They are not completely in favour of the proposed changes, so that's obviously an important consideration.

Although the member from Kenora–Rainy River said mining is very important to the north—and obviously it is—as I pointed out in my speech, it's also very important for southern Ontario, where so much of the equipment is manufactured to be used in the mines that are created from the exploration. So mining is very important for all of Ontario, and that's why it's so important that this bill be done in a positive fashion and be good legislation that does work so that that healthy mining industry can go forward and be successful in the province.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Pursuant to standing order 8, this House is in recess until 10:30 of the clock.

The House recessed from 1020 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: I'd like to introduce the family of page Timothy Swampillai. They're in the east gallery: his dad, Bruno; his mom, Jenita; his sister, Preyanka; and his brother, Jason.

Mr. Bill Mauro: I'd like to take this opportunity to introduce, visiting from Thunder Bay and the GTA for page Emily Sellner from my riding of Thunder Bay–Atikokan: her mother, Lori Marshall; grandparents Joanne and Bob Boyce; and Mary, Dirk and David Becker, aunt, uncle and cousin, along with Andy Griggs, their uncle, sitting up in the Speaker's gallery.

Ms. Helena Jaczek: In the west members' gallery from the great riding of Oak Ridges–Markham we have Mohan Pandit.

Mr. Robert Bailey: It's a great pleasure for me today to introduce the parents of Cameron Tomlinson in the west gallery: Scott, Christine and Madison. We welcome them to Queen's Park today.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I want to introduce Dominic Pasqualino, who is here from Thunder Bay in the east members' gallery.

Mr. David Zimmer: It's my great pleasure to introduce Albert and Eileen Schwartz from the riding of Willowdale—very distinguished citizens in Willowdale. Welcome to the Legislature.

Mr. Jim Brownell: I'd like to introduce William Hennessy and Shawn Boudreau, two students from Trent University completing their Bachelor of Education program this week.

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: Today I'm delighted to have with us Wilma Jeffray, who's the chair of Ontario Pork and an Ontario pork producer. Along with her is Mary-Ann Hendrikx, who is the vice-chair of Ontario Pork. They are here today because they are hosting a

luncheon. It's entitled "Put Ontario Pork on Your Fork" and it's to raise consumer awareness about the safe and high-quality pork products we have here in Ontario. All members of the assembly are invited to room 247 today from 11:30 till 1:30 for a pork luncheon.

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: I have the pleasure to introduce to you the director of the North America division of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Cuba, Mrs. Josefina Vidal Ferreiro, and the consul general, Mr. Jorge Soberón.

Hon. Sandra Pupatello: Thank you for this opportunity on a point of order. I'm very happy to present to the Premier of Ontario the jersey of the Windsor Spitfires, the Ontario Hockey League champs. On behalf of Dwight Duncan and myself, both representing this great riding and this great team, the Ontario champs—they're headed to Rimouski for the Memorial Cup and a very special presentation of the Premier of Ontario.

Mr. John O'Toole: It's a pleasure to welcome, from Ontario Health Food Awareness Day, three people I spoke with: Franco Salituro, as well as John Ferris and David Freeman, who are with us today.

Hon. Michael Chan: I want to welcome a co-op student from Unionville High School, Sin Logaranthan, to the House.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I would like to welcome students from Regina Mundi secondary school in my riding of Elgin—Middlesex—London who will be in the Speaker's gallery later this morning.

ANNIVERSARY OF LEGISLATIVE STAFF

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I also would like to take this opportunity to ask all members of the House to congratulate Gloria Richards, the Speaker's apartment coordinator, who today celebrates her 35th anniversary of service to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. Congratulations, Gloria.

This is a reminder to all members that today at 12:30, in rooms 228 and 230, there will be a members' pension information session. I would encourage all members to be in attendance.

ANNUAL REPORT, INFORMATION AND PRIVACY COMMISSIONER

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I beg to inform the House that today I've laid upon the table the 2008 Annual Report of the Information and Privacy Commissioner.

ORAL QUESTIONS

AGENCY SPENDING

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: My question is to the Premier. Premier, an FOI request which was filed by the

official opposition reveals that between 2003 and 2008, the Smart Systems for Health Agency spent at least 26 million tax dollars on consultants' fees. This is the agency the Premier quietly reorganized, I guess, last year, after it had wasted 647 million tax dollars, the agency the Premier apparently doesn't want the Auditor General to investigate.

Premier, can you explain why the Smart Systems for Health Agency relied so heavily on consultants despite the fact that, according to a Toronto Sun article, it had 166 staffers earning over \$100,000 a year?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Health.

Hon. David Caplan: I thank the member for the question, because our government is committed to modernizing Ontario's health system by harnessing the power of information technology to improve safety, quality and access to care. E-health requires expertise from some very highly technical individuals to develop and implement these kinds of projects and objectives. There is, I acknowledge, a high cost to attract the kind of talent that we need to make these projects a reality.

I just want to put it into some context for the member opposite. President Obama and the US government have identified a sum of some \$50 billion over the course of the next five years to be able to deliver electronic health records for all citizens in the United States. When you put it in that context and you look at the investments that we're making and at the results that we've achieved—I disagree, by the way, with the premise of many of the elements of the—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: Speaker, I don't know about you, but I didn't hear anything in that response that related to my question with respect to waste. In the 2007 election campaign, when the Premier was asked about reducing taxes, he responded, "No, I need that money." I think maybe the actions of this agency that your government has had the responsibility for, for—what?—six years now, is a pretty clear indicator of why you always need more taxpayers' dollars: to feed your inept oversight of agencies and ministries within this government. This is an agency that spent \$373,000 on lavish catering and \$1.7 million on travel.

Minister, this morning in a scrum, your Premier said that we need to ensure "that we get value for money." That's exactly what we're asking you to do. If you and your colleagues truly believe that and you support what your Premier said in the scrum today, why will you not call in the Auditor General?

Hon. David Caplan: In fact, my predecessor did even better and ordered an operational review of Smart Systems for Health, which yielded important information. In fact, I took very quick action to ensure that we have a new agency, led by president and CEO Sarah Kramer and chaired by Dr. Alan Hudson, that is very much on track and on target to deliver, as we have indicated, an electronic health record for all diabetic patients within the province of Ontario by 2012.

Just yesterday, I had the opportunity to be at the University Health Network to talk about the next move as far as an e-prescribing system for the province of Ontario. We have two pilot projects, one in Collingwood and one in Sault Ste. Marie, working incredibly well, yielding good information in their first few weeks alone.

As well, the member says that nothing was yielded, but 7,000 secured network sites: all hospital sites, public health units, satellite offices, family health teams and other physicians, continuing care agencies—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Final supplementary.

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Mr. Robert W. Runciman: Well, I guess we can't assume anything with this government. The minister should be aware that in his health Results-based Plan Briefing Book it says, "Ontarians are entitled to know what they are getting for their money.... The government will not spend where measurable results are not evident." That's on page 2, if you care to look it up. Your Premier preaches transparency, but as in so many other areas, his actions are quite different from the words. He's refusing, and you're refusing, to open the books on this agency to the Auditor General. I think taxpayers have a right to be concerned with respect to millions of their hard-earned dollars still being spent on fees, flights, food and hotels for consultants—an organization that already has a staff with 166 of them making over \$100,000 a year.

Minister, I ask you once again: Do you have a fundamental problem with opening this agency up for review by the Auditor General, to let the taxpayers know where their money is being spent?

Hon. David Caplan: In fact, the information that the member presents to this House, some of which is correct and some of which is not, was the result of a freedom-of-information request by the official opposition. Of course that information is public, and we do want Ontarians to know the hard work that this agency is doing in order to deliver electronic health records—a transformative strategy to be able to link physicians, pharmacists, nurses, dietitians and many other health professionals with consumers themselves, to be able to manage their health care, to be able to transform health care.

Ask a mother in Sioux Lookout if she sees the value in being able to get advice from a specialist at the Hospital for Sick Children without having to travel to Toronto. Ask a doctor in London in an emergency department if she sees the value of being able to look up the medication list of a confused or elderly patient who can't tell her what drugs she's taking. Ask the librarian with failing sight in Ottawa if she sees the value in wait times information—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

TAXATION

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: Back to the Premier. As you know, and we all know, the Victoria Day weekend is almost upon us—the unofficial launch of vacation

season. It's intended to be a weekend of relaxation and fun for Ontario families: camping, cottaging, boating and fishing with friends and family, and relaxing at home. I suspect that most families in this province are unaware, as the Premier suggested a week or two ago, of the heavy costs lying ahead for them when they plan future vacations. The government has been anxious to hide the real reach and extent of damage of the new McGuinty sales tax grab coming into effect July 1 of next year. We know it's going to cost Ontarians more money for an unending list of things they'll be using and doing on future Victoria Day weekends.

I ask the Premier, if you're so certain that increasing taxes on Ontarians is the right thing to do, why are you so committed to withholding the truth about the reach and cost of this massive tax hike?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I just ask the honourable member to withdraw that last comment, please.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: I withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Premier.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: In fact, Ontario needs a tax transformation that includes major tax cuts for families, businesses and small businesses. We're working with the tourism industry, providing additional funds as we transition to the new single sales tax. The times call on us to take bold measures, balanced measures that reduce the overall tax burden for all Ontarians. We are confident this is the right course of action to take. It will help Ontario get through this downturn, and when we get through it, our economy will grow faster and become bigger and stronger than when we went into it.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: Since this is clearly a day of rest for the Premier, he won't need a long weekend. I'll go back to the minister. The Premier and his minister want to keep the facts hidden from view, and I'll just go over a few of the long weekend vacation items that will be hit with your new 8% massive McGuinty tax: rest stops for coffee and doughnuts, gasoline, campsites, firewood, boat rentals, dock slip rentals, boat launching, fishing licences and fishing charters, golf fees, air travel, train fares, boat cruises, even postage stamps for our grandparents who want to send a postcard home—all taxed by Dalton McGuinty. Minister, try to fill us in on what I've missed. Do you or any of your colleagues have any appreciation of just how damaging your new sales tax will be to struggling Ontario families who want to take a break from the stress on a long weekend?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: What the member missed is a large personal tax cut, he missed a large corporate tax cut, and he missed a large small business tax cut, all of which will mean that when the entire tax reform package is implemented, Ontario will have a more competitive tax system and 93% of Ontarians will pay less in overall taxes. We'll have a more efficient tax system, one that will help this economy grow in the future.

I say to the member opposite, if he and his party feel that strongly, are they going to undo all of this in two years' time, in spite of what they've said up until now?

This is a tax reform package that benefits all Ontarians and will create jobs in the long term.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: Speaker, I don't know about you, but that sounded like an admission of defeat. We're ready to take over right now and deal with this issue.

A couple of organizations: Camping in Ontario is a group representing 67,000 campsites in the province. It says that the new McGuinty sales tax "would see most camping-related fees increase by 8%," and that "our members could potentially see a decrease in business as consumers decide they can't afford an 8% increase in their camping costs."

From the Nature and Outdoor Tourism Ontario website: "The move to a harmonized tax will result in a significant tax increase to our guests."

Minister, you're ignoring the concerns of groups who know the tourism industry and the importance of advocating for consumers. Your new massive tax grab is putting jobs at risk in a tough economy and punishing vacationing families. Once again, I ask you, why have you—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you, Minister?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Businesses will save costs as a result of a single sales tax, and I have confidence that those businesses will pass those savings on to consumers.

What I find particularly interesting—the member opposite said just a month ago, speaking of a harmonized sales tax, "In principle, we think it's something that should occur." That's Bob Runciman on March 25, 2009.

The next day—he had 24 hours to think about it—he said, "We've supported the principle of harmonization." That's Bob Runciman, again.

The times call for decisive action. The times call for a plan that will make the Ontario economy more competitive. We've offered that plan. It's the right plan. It will create jobs, improve the economy and help Ontario grow to become bigger—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

EXECUTIVE COMPENSATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question's to the Premier. As this government asks auto workers to make unprecedented sacrifices to keep companies like GM and Chrysler alive, as this government asks taxpayers to fork over their hard-earned tax dollars to prop up some of the world's largest corporations, New Democrats believe that the senior executives at these corporations must be required to make some sacrifices as well. That's why I introduced yesterday the Capping Executive Compensation Act, a bill that would place a ceiling of \$400,000 on compensation packages for senior executives at large corporations receiving government bailouts. My question is a simple one: Will this government support my bill?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I appreciate the effort made by my honourable colleague and the sentiment that in-

forms the bill that she's presented. But, no, I can't support it, and I'll tell you why. I think, ultimately, our responsibility is to find ways to enter into partnerships with businesses that serve the public interest—a partnership that serves the public interest. What we want to do is find ways, through these partnerships, to strengthen the economy and create jobs. If we are achieving that aim, if our partnerships strengthen the economy, if it creates more jobs, then we are satisfied. I'm not looking for a kind of incidental or collateral benefit, so to speak, to reach in and interfere with salaries awarded to executives.

Again, our objective is to achieve more jobs in a stronger economy, and if the partnerships achieve that, I think that's what the public wants us to do.

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The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I'm trying to understand the choices that this Premier is making. He introduces legislation that removes its obligation to the pension benefits guarantee fund, he forces auto workers to reopen their collective agreements as a condition of their employers receiving provincial aid, and he asks taxpayers to fork over billions of dollars to some of the world's largest corporations. When will he realize that high-flying executives at corporations on the public dole also have a role to play, and it starts with a limitation on their pay and on their perks?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I do agree that executives have a responsibility to lead by example, but I don't enthusiastically, on the part of our government, embrace interference in the private sector through our partnerships. What I do embrace and what I sense the responsibility to do is to find ways to enter into partnerships that serve the public interest. Again, that's all about creating jobs. It's about finding ways to strengthen the economy. It's about giving our families more reasons to be hopeful for themselves and their children. Those are the criteria that we apply, and I think that's what families want us to continue to do, and that's what we will do.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The public interest is served when everyone shares in the pain, I would submit to this Premier. In fact, President Obama recognized that with his financial services bailout, where he capped corporations' executive salaries at \$500,000. It's something this Premier could do as well. Plain and simple, it's about fairness. Hundreds of thousands of workers have lost their jobs, and the pensions of tens of thousands more are in danger. These workers and pensioners are making tremendous sacrifices. Corporate executives must start making sacrifices too, with a cap on their pay and with a cap on their perks. Why doesn't this Premier agree?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, we will do what is necessary to ensure that when we do enter into these partnerships, they serve the public interest, create jobs, strengthen the economy, give our families reason to be hopeful.

There will be some cases where it's appropriate for us to introduce the kind of capping that my honourable colleague talks about. In fact, we did that in the Chrysler deal. There is a cap in place on executive pay. In some cases, it will be appropriate and it will be possible; in others, it will not. But we will not be motivated by a sense of some kind of class warfare that sometimes inspires my colleagues opposite in the New Democratic Party. We will try to be fair to people on all sides, regardless of their income levels.

ELECTRONIC HEALTH INFORMATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is to the Premier. Ontario's eHealth system is shamefully lagging behind other provinces and jurisdictions, yet the price tag keeps growing and growing. This morning, the Toronto Star is reporting that Ontario's eHealth agency has spent more than \$67 million on consulting fees just during the past two years. This comes hot on the heels of a recent revelation that eHealth Ontario wasted hundreds and hundreds of millions of dollars. Why is this agency being allowed to burn through taxpayers' dollars like there's no tomorrow?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Health.

Hon. David Caplan: I again repeat for the member, and I hope she understands, that this is an important, transformational and expensive undertaking. Connecting 280 hospital sites, 69 public health units and satellites, over 1,600 family health teams and other physicians, almost 1,500 continuing care agencies, over 3,000 pharmacies, and of course Cancer Care Ontario, Cardiac Care Network, Trillium Gift of Life, air ambulance operation—50,000 health care professionals linked together and using the system. The member, I would hope, would want to understand the importance of this kind of work and the value that it delivers.

The member in her very first question talked about President Obama and the efforts south of the border—\$50 billion that he has earmarked. Here in this province, we've earmarked \$2 billion. We think that's an important investment—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: This government is not only wasting precious health care dollars, but it's creating an eHealth system that simply doesn't do the job. The earliest we will see a province-wide system of electronic health records is 2015, and even then the province's public health electronic records system, Panorama, will not be compatible with the system currently used by physicians. There won't be something as simple as coordinated vaccination records. This could have grave implications if a pandemic were to break out. Why are Ontarians being forced to wait so long and spend so much for a system that won't even meet our basic health needs?

Hon. David Caplan: Unfortunately, the member is quite incorrect and I don't think she knows what she's talking about. The electronic Child Health Network has

been in place for many years, where all pediatricians and physicians are linked together. In fact, we will have a diabetes registry for people living with diabetes in Ontario by 2012 and an ePrescribing system by 2012. Yes, we have talked to Ontarians and have set an end date of 2015 for electronic health records, but I do believe that we can accelerate that timeline.

As far as having all of that information, I can tell you that if you ask a physician in Belleville who checked best practice guidelines online if our investments and technology have value to him, that physician would say, "Absolutely." What has happened in Ontario has led to that transformation.

I disagree with the member opposite. I don't think she understands what she's talking about, and I think she should speak to medical—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock for a second. I just would caution the honourable member. Yes, there is room for healthy debate here, but not for making comments in the manner that he has been making those comments.

Please continue.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: You know what? There is a growing crisis in health care. Hospitals are regularly running at full capacity, nurses are being laid off and patient care is suffering. And what does this government do? Pour hundreds of millions of dollars down the eHealth drain and into the pockets of private corporations, with very little to show for it. How much health care money will this Premier waste before he pulls the plug and admits his eHealth experiment has been a spectacular and expensive flop?

Hon. David Caplan: The only thing that's been a flop is the rhetoric of the member opposite.

We're hiring nurses in Ontario. If you go to the Workopolis site today, you'll find that in the last two months, 400 positions have been listed for Ontario nurses. If you look at the record of this government, you'll see a 45% increase in health spending in the province of Ontario.

Quite frankly, I'm not surprised that the member doesn't understand the importance of eHealth in transforming our health care system, since there were no steps taken under NDP governments. We're seeing others around Canada which point to similar kinds of experiences. I believe, and medical experts are telling us, that these are some of the most critical investments that we can make in order to fuel the transformation in health care.

I know that around the world—if you look, as I say, south of the border, President Obama has earmarked \$50 billion over the course of the next five years. I think he understands, as this—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

PROTECTION FOR WORKERS

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: My question is to the Premier, and it has to do with some comments he made a week or so ago related to the failure of the Minister of

Labour and the Minister of Education to respond to the concerns of two women who worked as caregivers for a Liberal member of Parliament and her family. You said at the time that the perception was bad; it didn't look good. You tried to slough it off by saying that apparently the ministers had a tin ear. That would clearly suggest to any objective observer that you felt they should have acted, that they should have responded to the stories of abuse from two vulnerable women, that the fact that the allegations involved a powerful and prominent Liberal reinforced the bad perception. So despite your fine words, Premier, about defending the downtrodden, when push comes to shove, protecting a Liberal, the queen of mean, takes priority—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

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Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I'm not sure what the question was in there, but it is an opportunity for me to speak to this issue again. I think that both ministers acted responsibly and honourably in the circumstances. They made themselves available. I think pretty well in each and every instance for all those women, it was their very first opportunity for them to meet with persons in positions of authority. They had an opportunity to tell their stories, and those stories were listened to. My colleagues did not interfere with due process. They provided information to the women who were present there.

It's now an opportunity on their part to follow up with that. I think that was the appropriate thing to do. I think it was the honourable thing to do. I think it was the right thing to do in the circumstances.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: The question was related to the comments the Premier made to the media. He said this does look bad—this does look bad; there's no question about it—but then he comes into the House and starts defending the ministers for something that looks bad.

Even Jim Coyle in the Toronto Star, not friends of the Conservative Party for most of their history, described the conduct of your ministers as a shameful act—a shameful act. Most Ontarians who are viewing these proceedings and wondering about the meaning and sincerity of the words of you and your colleagues have to share that perspective.

Under the Employment Standards Act, the Minister of Labour has the ability to exercise a power and perform a duty even if he or she has delegated to a person under this section. He failed in that responsibility.

I have to ask you, Premier: What happened to the principles you proudly stood for when you were in this chair, when you were in this seat? What happened? Why did they—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I would like to think that those principles remain intact. I understand where my colleague comes from on this particular score. He sees an opportunity here and he seeks to exploit that. You might

even argue that's his responsibility, Speaker, but I see things differently on the right side of your chair.

I think our responsibility is to ensure that we're being fair, in particular being fair to the people of Ontario, and in particular, being fair to the women who were present that evening. I think fairness also extends to any allegations and accusations made against ministers of our government. I think they behaved appropriately in the circumstances. I think they acted fairly. In fact, we heard yesterday in testimony on Parliament Hill that the two women complainants in question took advantage of the hotline that we had put in place. I think the process is working. I think we have a shared responsibility to follow due—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

PROTECTION FOR WORKERS

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: My question is to the Premier. Did the Minister of Labour actually ask his employment standards investigators to examine the 30 cases of allegations of abuse made by nannies on April 25?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Labour.

Hon. Peter Fonseca: I failed to hear the last part of that question from the member, but what I can tell you, as the Premier has just said, is that when we have reached out to the community, as we continue to do, we have heard stories from these caregivers. We've done it in a dignified and respectful manner but also in a professional and fair manner, where we have provided information to them.

As you also heard from the Premier and the testimonies by these two live-in caregivers yesterday at the standing committee in Ottawa, those individuals did avail themselves of the 1-800 hotline and are receiving professional help from our ministry officials. That's the right approach. We will continue to move forward with that type of approach because that's one that is—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: To the Minister of Labour: What he says is that these women used the 1-800 number. He certainly didn't respond to their call. In fact, the only reason the public is now aware of the abuses around caregivers in the province is because of the bravery of Magdalene Gordo and Richelyn Tongson to tell the stories to reporters and a federal committee. That is the only reason we know of them. Telling their story to the current labour minister got them absolutely nowhere.

Why won't the Premier do the right thing and replace this labour minister?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: What I can say to that member is that all of the individuals who have participated in the round tables, and in that one in particular, were very thankful—very thankful—to have that forum to be able to speak to elected officials, receive support, and let them know what we're doing as a province and what control we have. What we're doing is, we're going to be banning those fees.

But to that member, I have to say, who has been challenged with her own labour issues, I will not take any lectures or lessons from that member.

SPORTS AND RECREATION INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Khalil Ramal: My question is for the Minister of Energy and Infrastructure. Minister, we've heard lately a lot about various funding for infrastructure from both budgets, provincial and federal. Also, my riding of London-Fanshawe is especially interested in the announcement you made on Monday about the new Recreational Infrastructure Canada program in Ontario and the Ontario Recreation program with Minister Clement and also my colleague the member from Mississauga-Brampton South.

Can you tell us, Minister, what this announcement means to Ontarians about creating jobs, stimulating the economy and also supporting communities?

Hon. George Smitherman: I want thank the member from London-Fanshawe for his question, and I want to thank my colleague from Mississauga-Brampton South for participating in our announcement the other day, with Minister Tony Clement from the government of Canada, of a new program that will allow to us renew our recreation infrastructure here in the province of Ontario.

In the government's budget, presented by my colleague the Minister of Finance, the government of Ontario is committing \$32.5 billion—unprecedented—to infrastructure in the next two years, \$5 billion of that from the government of Canada. This program will allow us to address needs at hockey rinks, swimming pools and other recreational community sites throughout Ontario; \$195 million from the province of Ontario, starting with \$68 million from the government of Canada. This will allow the two governments to provide \$1 million each, with a matching one third for projects that come from local communities.

I'll be happy in the supplementary to talk about more of the criteria that will allow communities to rebuild their recreation infrastructure.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Khalil Ramal: It's important for the city of London because we have a lot of facilities that belong to the city, whether they are hockey arenas or soccer fields etc. But so many different communities support facilities, like the Marconi Club, the Portuguese Club and also the Boys' and Girls' Club. They are wondering if they are eligible for those supports and funding. If they are, can you tell us how they can apply and benefit from this infrastructure?

Hon. George Smitherman: It is an excellent question, as I think that the member's question allows us to highlight one thing about this program which is particularly noteworthy. Most of the infrastructure programs that we've been speaking about over the last month or two have been focused on municipal applicants only, but in this case a broader array of communities, like First

Nations communities and also not-for-profit organizations, will have an opportunity to apply. We'll be looking forward to working with the Ministry of Health Promotion in helping to evaluate these processes, keeping in mind that the focus is on the renewal of recreational facilities.

In addition, the program is open for receiving applications. Applications will close by May 29, and we want to encourage people to take a look at the program. It's a joint-intake application process for these funds. There are no limits to the number of applications that people can make, and the commitments are that these projects would be substantially completed by March 31, 2011, therefore providing important—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: To the Minister of Economic Development and Trade. Minister, there appears to be little support for your reverse Reaganism amongst economists: "I have no faith in the Ontario government's ability to conduct this kind of industrial policy. It hasn't worked in the past, and the world has not gotten any simpler or easier to predict since then." That's a quote from William Robson, CEO of the C.D. Howe Institute.

Also, "I freely admit that we are living in unusual circumstances, but that doesn't mean we should throw out decades and decades of what we've learned in one fell swoop": That's from Doug Porter, the deputy chief economist of the Bank of Montreal. And the list goes on.

Minister, it seems that the economic community is lining up against you. Can you provide any examples of economists who agree with your plan? Can you please indicate any recent instances where a state-run economy has succeeded?

Hon. Michael Bryant: Let me talk about a success, a company called Roxul. I know that the company is in the member's riding, and I know when I asked him yesterday in estimates whether or not he supported the investment in Roxul, I didn't get a yes out of it. It is surprising that the member would not support an investment in his riding.

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But here's what's happening: With the support of this \$10-million loan from the advanced manufacturing investment strategy, Roxul was able to not only increase the number of employees from the original 135 employees, but it has recently gone from 200 employees to 300 employees. It is because of the investment made by the government—a loan that was repaid—that this great Halton company could expand, that more people have work in that member's riding—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: I didn't hear one economist who supports your proposal. I don't believe in state subsidies in my riding and I don't believe in state subsidies in Ontario. I think that you're headed down the wrong path.

There are a few problems with the minister's theory. First, it's theoretical. He cannot point to a shining city on the hill, because there isn't one. Secondly, businesses will spend more time on applications and lobbying and less time on innovations and production. Thirdly, it begins a vicious cycle: More and more companies will expect handouts. Fourthly, it forces non-subsidized companies to pay their competitors with their tax dollars.

There's another and better way to partner with businesses, Minister: lower taxes, reduce red tape, train a skilled workforce and maintain a fair marketplace. Healthy competition naturally leads to the success of the best companies.

Given your government's track record, Minister, how can we be sure that your choices will be—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Minister?

Hon. Michael Bryant: I'll tell you something: If this government has a choice between walking with the workers or riding with the economists, we're going to be walking with the workers.

As a result of the investment that this government has made in companies in that member's riding, jobs have grown. As a result of the investment that this government has made in companies, hundreds of millions of dollars—in fact, over \$1 billion has been leveraged. We—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Minister?

Hon. Mr. Bryant: I think I hit a nerve over there.

How about this economist: "I understand the need to partner with industry and to leverage investment, and I value GM as an important Ontario employer"—Mr. Ted Chudleigh, the member who just asked the question.

I stand with Mr. Chudleigh and the workers. Mr. Chudleigh and I will continue to make investments in Ontario on behalf of those workers, to leverage those jobs, to grow that economy—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Premier. If this government is supportive of public transit, as it claims to be, why is the Premier refusing to fulfill his government's one-third share of the funding for the Toronto Transit Commission's new Bombardier streetcars?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Energy and Infrastructure.

Hon. George Smitherman: It would be appropriate for me, in the presence of the mayor of Thunder Bay, to welcome her to this Legislature. We had a chance to meet on this and other subjects today.

The first thing is to do the necessary work here, which is to remind the honourable member that her party is on record as having opposed the expansion of public transit, ridiculing an \$800-million investment in a new transit line in the city of Toronto as going to the "unpopulated" York region. These are the comments by a past leader of that party.

No one over here on this side quarrels with the necessity of finding a way to work with the city of Toronto and to support the acquisition of additional streetcars, but we do think it's important that people have the necessary support in place before such announcements are made. At present we're evaluating a stimulus application on the part of the city of Toronto for eligibility—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: This streetcar contract represents new hope for Bombardier workers like Dominic Pasqualino, who's here in the House today, and hundreds of Thunder Bay workers just like him. It will make it easier for commuters to get around Toronto, it will get more people out of their cars and on to transit, and it will help Ontario—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I think some people are very anxious to have a long weekend. The member from Thunder Bay—Atikokan, I'd appreciate if you would listen to the question from the honourable member.

Leader of the third party.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Thank you, Speaker. As I was saying before I was so rudely interrupted, it will help Ontario meet our climate change objectives. The McGuinty government either supports public transit or it doesn't. When will the Premier stop playing political games and pony up the cash so we can get the streetcars on the rails?

Hon. George Smitherman: The honourable member says you either support public transit or you don't. Why did that party stand in this Legislature and criticize the advance of a subway line to York region, calling York region sparsely populated? The same applies to the honourable member. And wasn't it this Premier, not two weeks before the story about streetcars, who stood with the mayor of the city of Toronto and committed an unprecedented \$9 billion in the greater Toronto area towards the Metrolinx projects? Did the honourable member notice that on that day, this Premier committed the province of Ontario not to one-third funding for those lines, not to 50% or the historic 75%, but to the new, history-making situation in the province of Ontario where the province steps up to the plate and commits to fund 100% of the Metrolinx projects in this city?

LANGUAGE TRAINING

Mrs. Linda Jeffrey: My question is for the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. As many members of this Legislature are aware, language proficiency is an important skill needed to succeed in Canadian society. Peel region is the second-largest region in Ontario and the place where newcomers frequently choose to settle. These newcomers rely on language training services such as adult non-credit English- and French-as-a-second-language training to access work opportunities in Canada. These language programs provide newcomers with the tools they need to integrate socially and economically.

Can the minister share with us what our government is doing to support these valuable programs?

Hon. Michael Chan: Every year, close to 250,000 newcomers come to Canada, and half of them choose Ontario as their home. Newcomers come from 160 countries, speaking more than 200 languages. This foreign-language capacity gives Ontario a competitive edge in the global market. However, English- and French-as-a-second-language training is the foundation of success here in Ontario.

The McGuinty government is proud of its record in welcoming newcomers to Ontario. This is why, since 2003, the McGuinty government has invested over \$600 million in settlement services, and in particular \$60 million annually in language training.

Language proficiency in French or English is key to newcomer integration here in Ontario. We in the government know—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mrs. Linda Jeffrey: The region of Peel is expected to exceed 1.5 million people in the next 25 years. When I meet with newcomers in my riding of Brampton–Springdale, I often hear about the importance of these programs and how vital it is to access high-quality language training programs in order to better integrate and find success in their new communities.

Would the minister share with the members of this Legislature how the government is ensuring that these important language programs are meeting the labour market needs of today, as well as addressing the labour needs of tomorrow's newcomer?

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Hon. Michael Chan: I want to thank the honourable member for the question. I also want to thank her for her hard work for newcomers while serving as parliamentary assistant to my ministry.

I'm so pleased that on April 23 this government announced a redesign of the adult English- and French-as-a-second-language programs. These reforms will make the programs more results-based and learner-focused, and will increase access and address a broad spectrum of adult language training needs. Included in the reforms is a funding increase of \$4.5 million for 2009-10. These changes will prepare Ontario's newcomers for the jobs of today and tomorrow.

The McGuinty government understands newcomers are vital to a strong and vibrant economy, because when newcomers succeed, Ontario succeeds.

EDUCATION

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: To the Minister of Education: I would like you to listen to your education policy in the cold light of day: "If a student misses a test (whether they skip class or are sick) or if they cheat then the evaluation is not valid and they must not be given a zero. The

student must have an opportunity to be re-evaluated on the material.

"Assignments can have a due date but if the student does not hand it in on the due date a zero cannot be assigned. The student must be allowed to hand in the assignment late without being penalized."

Minister, how do you expect to prepare our students for employment in the business world, an environment that does not tolerate this kind of behaviour, when you refuse to enforce any discipline in our schools?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The current evaluation and assessment policy has been in place since 2000. We're in the process of actually consulting on that policy and looking at how it might change.

But the real point of this issue is, do we believe that our schools should be sorting mechanisms that say, "There are certain kids who are going to succeed and there are certain kids who aren't going to succeed, and we're just going to write those kids off"? Or should we change the culture in our schools and have a culture that says, "We are going to find a way to put programs in place that are going to help every student succeed, live up to his or her potential and be a part of this society and this economy"? That is what we're trying to do in this education system.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: Minister, certainly you of all people should understand the importance of creating clear consequences for actions or for failing to act for our students.

Over 5,000 parents, just to this point in time, have signed an online petition asking that you take this matter in hand and toughen up these policies. We cannot expect our students to succeed in a competitive global marketplace when you proceed to move them through school without any consequences for late assignments, cheating or skipping class. This is not preparing our students for the challenges of the real world.

Minister, will you take action to correct this policy now and ensure that our children have the life skills they need to be successful in the real world?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: It is exactly what we are doing to make sure that our students have opportunities to develop the skills they need to succeed.

In the real world—now, I challenge the notion that school is not the real world; I think it is the real world. But in the working world, when people make a mistake, employers work to help that person to achieve and succeed. It is in no one's interest, whether in school or out of school, to have what that party had, which were zero tolerance policies that don't give people a second chance, that don't help people learn from their mistakes, that don't help people learn the skills they need to get on.

What we have done is put in place programs so that there are consequences. There is no policy in our government manuals that says that there's no policy for consequences. There are consequences, but there are also programs that help kids to learn—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

TAXATION

Mr. Michael Prue: My question is for the Minister of Finance.

I've been contacted by yet another small business person, Janice Bowden. Janice will be yet another victim of this government's wrong-headed tax grab, the HST. Janice is worried that her wilderness fishing resort in Haileybury will lose substantial business during its short season as a direct result of the tax grab. In her letter to me, she writes, "In July 2010, it will cost a family of five \$396 more to come to Red Pine."

The HST will hurt families and businesses alike. Why is this government making it harder for families to take a hard-earned break in Ontario's great outdoors by charging them an additional 8%?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Again my colleague opposite doesn't paint the entire picture. He neglected to respond to his constituent that, in fact, Ontarians will be getting a personal tax cut, which will help them adjust to this new tax regime, which will create jobs and help this economy improve.

Every OECD country, save and except the United States, as well as four of our sister provinces have a single value-added tax. It is an efficient tax. It is the right way to tax consumption versus income. We're lowering his constituent's corporate taxes. We're lowering other constituents' personal income taxes. It's the right reform package that will help Ontario get through this very challenging time. When we come out of it, and we will, we will be bigger, we will be better and we will be stronger as a people.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Michael Prue: Quite the contrary. This tax grab will punish Ontario businesses and Ontario families alike. The HST will not create jobs. At Red Pine Wilderness Lodge, it will kill jobs. Janice Bowden's business is already feeling the effects of this recession. With guest numbers down for this summer, she says, "In 2007 and 2008, we employed eight summer students—this year we can only afford to hire three." The HST tax grab is bad for her business, bad for hard-working families and bad for students who desperately need summer jobs.

My question: Why won't this government listen to Ontarians like Janice Bowden who are fed up and scared for their future, and simply axe the tax?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The member opposite, in fact, makes the case for a bold policy that will help rebuild this economy as we come out of the downturn. The member opposite does not want to face the future. By the way, that member opposite and his party suggested increasing the PST by 1%, a billion-and-a-half-dollar tax grab.

We brought forward a package of tax changes that will assist small business; that ensure that 93% of Ontarians pay less tax; that we have a fairer tax system that taxes consumption, not income. That's why a range of business organizations, individuals and others have come to support this and see that it is the best way to build this economy, to get new jobs, to make our exports more

competitive. It's time that member and his party joined the 21st century.

GO TRANSIT

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: I have a question for the Minister of Transportation.

Mr. Minister, you've said on a number of occasions that transit is really a high priority for this government, and indeed we've seen announcement after announcement on funding to improve public transit in the greater Toronto area, in Hamilton, across the province. We've seen shovels in the ground already on projects like the Toronto-York subway expansion and improvements on various transit stations.

My question today is about one of the more controversial improvements GO Transit is currently undertaking. As you know, work is being done at the west Toronto diamond to separate the current Canadian National railroad and Canadian Pacific railroad tracks. I realize that this is important work for GO Transit, since the current criss-crossing of the lines affects the on-time reliability for those who travel along the Georgetown corridor. That being said, I have heard from a great number of constituents in my riding about the effects of this construction on the local residents. Minister, can you share with this House, please, what you're going to do to ensure that this—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Minister?

1130

Hon. James J. Bradley: I've heard from the member for Davenport on numerous occasions on this issue, as well as other provincial and federal members. I appreciate that the work being done on the Toronto west diamond is certainly disruptive to some of the residents in the area. I also understand that it's very important work needed to increase and improve service for thousands of commuters. The work being done there is one of the most critical pieces of track infrastructure that GO needs to build.

It is important to note that there will be long-term benefits to the local community, including the elimination of scheduling conflicts between freight trains and GO trains. This means less idling, less pollution from stopped trains, and less noise. Currently when trains pass over the diamond, every car's wheel set makes a loud pounding noise; these are frequent noises comparable to the sound of piledriving. When the work is complete, those noises will be eliminated.

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: Thank you very much, Minister, for clarifying how crucial this work really is in the west Toronto diamond, both to our neighbours on the tracks and for those who take the GO train every day.

I'm fully supportive of getting people out of their cars and onto public transit. However, I'm still hearing from constituents about the noise that the current piledriving machines are making. I understand that the goal of this government is to reduce congestion and get people out of

their personal vehicles and onto public transit. However, I'm worried that this may be at the expense of the local residents' quality of life. Those living in the area are wondering if there is anything else that can be done to reduce the noise and just how long this will continue.

Can the Minister of Transportation share with this House what improvements have been planned or already made with respect to the work being done at this diamond? I want to be able to tell my constituents that we're listening and we're doing our best to find solutions to reduce this noise.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I've spoken to GO Transit about this matter and conveyed these views to them. I know they understand and are sympathetic to the concerns of the local residents. They have taken significant steps in addressing the noise and vibration issues raised and are working actively to test new alternatives which they hope will make a noticeable difference in the community. GO Transit has a community liaison who is on the site every day. This individual has been working directly with residents and businesses to address their concerns. I understand that GO recently sent out a newsletter to the community updating them on the project. The focus of GO now is in three areas: evaluating ways to redesign and accelerate work so the piledriving finishes sooner—GO is already ahead of schedule, I should note; muffling the hammering noise; and exploring other technologies. There is a genuine concern being expressed by the member and the residents of the area, and GO is making efforts—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

CITY OF VAUGHAN

Mr. John O'Toole: My question is to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. Minister, you'd be well aware of the articles recently in the media with respect to the community of Vaughan and the taxpayers there reeling under the \$750,000 of legal and audit fees on the taxpayers' backs in the municipality. The article quoted from the report that was presented to the city of Vaughan. The minister would be aware of the controversy surrounding it.

I would like to ask the minister directly: What actions are you prepared to take to remove this uncertainty in the community of Vaughan? Are you doing anything about it?

Hon. Jim Watson: I'd like to thank the honourable member; he's my critic and this is his first question to me, so I very much appreciate that.

I do thank the honourable member because the situation in Vaughan is troublesome for all of us. Our staff have been to meet with officials from Vaughan. They're going back again, I believe within the next two weeks, to see what we can do at the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing to help with some of the challenges that Vaughan council is facing. On any of the legal issues that are before the courts, whether it's the Municipal Elections Act or other matters, obviously I can't comment on

those particular situations. But I certainly am concerned about the situation and would urge all members of Vaughan council and the mayor to work together for the betterment of the people of Vaughan. That's the role and responsibility of all local officials, and I would urge them to do so.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. John O'Toole: In a sort of trivial way, yes, I haven't asked you questions because you actually haven't done anything. But in a more serious state—

Interjections.

Mr. John O'Toole: The best way to avoid making mistakes is, don't do anything.

However, in all seriousness, this is a serious issue, and you're ignoring it. That's the problem. Citizens of Vaughan have written to you, petitioned you and asked you for help. They're spending taxpayers' money at an unsavoury rate and you're sitting by, doing nothing. In fact, the article in the *Globe and Mail* was specific. It said, "The Municipal Elections Act is just not up to the job." Perhaps you designed it.

Clearly, you have done nothing. What are you going to commit to do for the city of Vaughan instead of twiddling your thumbs?

Hon. Jim Watson: I don't even know where to begin with that question. I should correct the record: The Municipal Elections Act changes were brought in by your government when you were in office, point number one.

Secondly, I'm very proud of our track record in municipal affairs and housing. Let me just give you a couple of examples of some of the investments that this government, under the leadership of Premier McGuinty, has brought to the people of Vaughan: Investing in Ontario, \$8.6 million; the MIII infrastructure fund, \$975,000; roads and bridges, \$2.9 million; and gas tax for York region, of which Vaughan is a part, \$14.1 million.

We're proud of the work that we've done in partnership with the good people of Vaughan, but we do ask the members of Vaughan council and the mayor to continue to work out their differences, because at the end of the day this is all about public service and serving the public. We want to make sure that the elected officials of Vaughan are doing their job.

With respect to the election—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

WATER QUALITY

Mr. Peter Tabuns: To the Minister of the Environment: The Ontario Drinking Water Advisory Council's report on acceptable levels of radioactive tritium in drinking water is almost a year overdue. Apparently the report is in your office. Is the government delaying the release of the report because it shows that radioactive tritium standards are too lax in Ontario, and that the government's plan to build nuclear reactors at Darlington will further compromise the safety of Lake Ontario-sourced drinking water?

Hon. John Gerretsen: I thank the member for the question. We are not delaying the release of the report at all. We are studying the report and we will be making our comments on it in due course.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The time for question period has ended.

The leader of the third party on a point of order.

CORRECTION OF RECORD

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I just want to rise on a point of order to correct my record. In question two this morning, I inadvertently used the words "Toronto Star" instead of "Toronto Sun."

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Halton on a point of order.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: I would remind the members that there's a lunch of the pension committee today. After you have lunch with the pork producers, you can stop by. It's an information session.

And I know the Speaker wants to introduce a high school from his riding.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Well, it's the Speaker's prerogative. Once again, I just want to take this opportunity to welcome the students from Regina Mundi to Queen's Park today. Have a great day here in Toronto. Welcome.

There being no deferred votes, this House stands recessed until 3 p.m.

The House recessed from 1138 to 1500.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

M^{me} France Gélinas: It is my pleasure to introduce, in the west gallery, Ingrid Atyeo, from Princess Margaret, ONA Local 97; Beverly Belfon and Carolyn Edgar, both from North York General Hospital, ONA Local 6; Patti Lalla, who's from Mount Sinai Hospital, ONA Local 82; Ray Prystanski, who's from the University Health Network, ONA Local 97; and Lawrence Walter, who's with the Ontario Nurses' Association. All of these people are nurses serving the people of Ontario.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

PORK INDUSTRY

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Today, MPPs from all parties enjoyed a great lunch of Ontario pork. I want to thank Wilma Jeffray and everyone from Ontario Pork for bringing it to Queen's Park.

Mr. Peter Kormos: You should be thanking the pigs.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: He gave his life.

While it was an enjoyable lunch, there was a serious message: that Ontario pork is of the highest quality, safe and nutritious. The international scientific community, including the World Health Organization and the World Organization for Animal Health, agrees that H1N1 influenza A is not a food safety issue. We want to assure

Ontario consumers and our international trading partners that Ontario pork is safe.

We understand the contributions that pork farmers make to our province and our economy. This industry has a GDP of over \$800 million in Canada as a whole. With pork prices dropping, farmers are now losing \$30 a hog. Our 2,800 pork producers and their families need the support of Ontario consumers and the Ontario government. We know that many beginning farmers were already struggling because they were missed by the government's Ontario cattle, hog and horticulture program. That's why last week, in this Legislature, we offered to work with the government to promote Ontario pork and to design a program that will support all of our pork producers.

There's one step that we can all take today to help our farmers: Shop local and buy Ontario pork. I encourage everyone in this Legislature and at home to support our pork farmers and put Ontario pork on your fork.

NURSING WEEK

M^{me} France Gélinas: I'm really pleased to rise today to recognize Nursing Week in Ontario. This is a week to celebrate and thank the nurses of Ontario. It is also a week to listen to nurses and to reflect on the contribution these health care professionals make in every community across this province, every single day of the year. Nurses are found in every part of our health care system, from home care to public health, from primary care to long-term care, from health promotion to, of course, hospitals.

It is also a week where we would be wise to assess the progress we have made in the past year: whether we are any closer to providing the support and resources our nursing professionals need in order to deliver the care relied on by Ontarians. The sad fact is that we're lagging behind when it comes to supporting our nursing professionals. Nurses are facing tougher working conditions and we are seeing cuts to experienced nurses in an overburdened health care system.

New Democrats renew our commitment this week to the immediate hiring of the promised 9,000 nurses. We reassert our commitment to ensuring a healthy and safe workplace for all nurses, free from harassment, bullying and work-related disease and injuries. We are recommitting ourselves to supporting our hard-working nurse professionals in doing the world-class jobs that they do.

Nurses are the heart and soul of the health care system. Let's not forget that cuts to nurses mean cuts to care. Happy Nursing Week.

TOWN OF MILLBROOK

Mr. Rick Johnson: I'm pleased to rise in the House today to speak about an event I attended on May 7 in the town of Millbrook, which is in my riding of Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock. I was representing the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. We announced that the province was investing \$97,000 in the expansion

of the Millbrook and District Medical Centre. This project will: increase the size of the medical centre by almost 50%; create better patient consultation space, accessible washrooms and a secure records management area; allow new medical staff to be hired; and help to entice new business and families to the area.

I made a commitment to the people in my riding that, as MPP, I would work diligently to bring improved facilities to our communities. I am proud that my constituents have a partner in this government, a partner that is demonstrably committed to improving health care for rural communities.

I was pleased to make the announcement with Reeve Neal Cathcart and Ross Gillis, chair of the Millbrook and District Medical Centre board of directors.

I congratulate the local community for their fundraising efforts that have helped make this project a reality.

Those who cherish heritage life will find in Millbrook a legacy to Ontario and small-town life.

Millbrook is host to the award-winning 4th Line Theatre, an outdoor summer theatre that will be presenting two world premier productions this summer: *The Right Road to Pontypool*—my hometown—by Alex Poch-Goldin, and *Welcome Death*, by Robert Winslow.

I am proud to speak to the House about the work we're doing to support health services for the citizens and community in the town of Millbrook, in my riding of Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock.

All of this arts and heritage is just a 90-minute drive from Toronto.

UXBRIDGE QUAKER MEETING HOUSE

Mr. John O'Toole: I'd like to thank, first, Pina Martino for allowing me to have this statement today celebrating the anniversary of the Uxbridge Quaker Meeting House.

I'm pleased to recognize the 200th anniversary of the Quaker Meeting House in Uxbridge.

Quakers came to Uxbridge in 1805 from Pennsylvania, by way of Yonge Street and Newmarket, to build their original log meeting house in 1809. Today's meeting house dates back to 1820.

The 200th anniversary will be celebrated on Sunday, June 14, with special events that include a short Quaker service, a concert and a display of Quaker artifacts.

Congratulations to the chair of the Friends' Meeting House, Ronald Gould, as well as trustees and board members. They include: Bob and Mary Hartrick, Elva Kerry, Joyce Huntington, Lorraine LeGrand, James Ball, Arlene Heywood, Sharon Tait-Longhurst, Ian Fowlie, Donald James, Russell Gould, and Bruce and Betty Ball from Bowmanville. All are descendants of Quaker families.

We will also celebrate the publication of a book by board member Lloyd Ball on the Quaker history in Uxbridge. His book is entitled *The History of the Friends' Meeting House of Quaker Hill*.

It's my understanding, as well, that Ontario's Lieutenant Governor, the Honourable David Onley, is scheduled to attend.

We continue to honour the values of simplicity, integrity, equality, peace and justice exemplified in the Quaker community.

Best wishes to all who have participated in their capacity to celebrate this bicentennial.

TOURISM

Mr. Kuldip Kular: As we approach the summer season, I encourage my constituents and all Ontarians to rediscover our great province this summer.

Ontario is home to countless attractions, from cultural centres and festivals to natural parks and monuments. Vibrant communities, shopping, great food and tourist attractions abound. Our community centres offer fun and programs for people of all interests and ages.

Whether it is to be the family vacation to remember, or a trip on a budget, there is plenty to do right here at home in Ontario. And what better way to support our local economy than to explore Ontario this summer?

My own stomping ground, Brampton, is home to a heritage complex, butterfly conservatory and several museums, to name just a few sights worth seeing. We have galleries, sports venues, shopping centres, restaurants, entertainment and hotels for visitors—everything one could need to relax and enjoy the season.

I urge Ontarians and my colleagues to help local businesses by taking the time to rediscover Ontario and their own communities. Visit your local tourism association; even easier, the official Ontario tourism site, at ontariotravel.net, to begin a memorable summer.

ONTARIO POLICE MEMORIAL

Mr. Toby Barrett: Thousands gathered outside Queen's Park last week to honour and remember fallen police officers at the 10th annual Ontario Police Memorial ceremony of remembrance. This is Police Week, and this year marks the 100th anniversary of the Ontario Provincial Police.

1510

This wall of honour includes the names of all 236 officers killed in the line of duty since 1804. Two names were added this year: Constables Jeffrey Armstrong and Frank Hare. Constable Hare died in 1951. He was struck by a train during the pursuit of a speeding car in my hometown of Port Dover. He was 44 years old.

Our publisher and editor of the Port Dover Maple Leaf provides a bit of background: "On Saturday, June 2, 1951, Constable Frank Hare and Police Chief Ivan Irwin were patrolling in the Port Dover police department GMC van. The ... van had just been purchased by the Port Dover Lions Club. Constable Hare was driving.

"They saw a speeding car and took chase. The two vehicles approached the Lake Erie and Northern Railway's Main Street crossing just as the train was arriving from Simcoe.

"The officers were broadsided.

"The popular police officer was killed and Chief Irwin suffered injuries."

I ask members of the House to take a few minutes and visit the wall of honour and recognize those who have given their lives on our behalf. Thank you.

TAXATION

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: I rise to discuss one of the most talked about items in the McGuinty government's recent budget: taxes. The McGuinty government understands the trying times Ontarians are facing, resulting from a mortgage and banking crisis that originated in the United States. The whole world was affected by this. Ontarians need government more than ever to be on their side to help them weather the difficult economic storm in our midst.

The government has taken up this cry and delivered, in the form of tax relief that will put more money into people's pockets so they can continue to do the things working families need to do, such as put food on the table, save for their children's post-secondary education and meet the other responsibilities demanded of them.

The McGuinty government's tax relief measures seek, first and foremost, to help Ontario's middle class by delivering a 16.5% tax cut on the first \$36,848 of taxable income by reducing the tax rate from the 6.05% to a proposed 5.05%, effective next year.

Understanding that small and medium-sized businesses are the engine of Ontario's economy, the McGuinty government has also decided to lighten their tax bill by cutting corporate tax rates across the board for small businesses by 18% through the implementation of a twofold reduction to the general corporate tax rate, commencing in two phases: a 14.7% reduction immediately and a further reduction thereafter of 16.7% in total.

Ontario needs—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Members' statements.

WINE INDUSTRY

Mr. Bruce Crozier: Today, I want to encourage my colleagues and, for that matter, all the people in Ontario to do similar to what my friend from Bramalea-Gore-Malton said; that is, tour Ontario. But specifically, I would like you to come and visit southwestern Ontario, and take what is called the southwestern Ontario wine route. We have 14 great wineries in southwestern Ontario, mainly in the Chatham-Kent-Essex area. We think it makes a lovely day to tour these wineries, see the products they have and, of course, take some home from time to time.

If you feel inclined, you can take a leisurely trip to Pelee Island, visit the Pelee Island Winery, spend the day there and cook your own lunch while having a glass of wine. It's a day's event, or you can take a couple of days and do this. I encourage everyone to come to the north

shore of Lake Erie, to the southwestern Ontario wine route. If you would like more information, you can contact the Southwestern Ontario Vintners at www.swovintners.com. Please come, have a good time and enjoy the summer.

PORK INDUSTRY

Ms. Leeanna Pendergast: I want to take time to welcome to the Legislature today many of the partners of the Ontario pork sector, including hog farmers as well as representatives from the processing industry.

My riding of Kitchener-Conestoga is over 40% rural, with hog farmers in all three townships of Wilmot, Woolwich and Wellesley. This afternoon I was present, as were many members of the House from all parties, at a lunch celebrating Ontario pork. I want to thank all members and staff who were able to attend and to show their support.

Ontario pork is safe to eat. I'm proud of the steps our industry takes each and every day to ensure that Ontarians can enjoy safe, nutritious pork. Our producers employ strict biosecurity protocols, and all animals are inspected prior to slaughter.

The pork sector is extremely important to our economy, with 2,800 hog producers and 33,000 Ontarians employed in this industry. The pork sector contributed \$4.7 billion to the Ontario economy in 2008, and affects my riding of Kitchener-Conestoga directly. We acknowledge the confusion over the H1N1 flu virus has been challenging for Ontario's hog industry. I hope all members join me in talking to their constituents and encouraging them to buy pork on their next trip to the local grocery store and, please, in reaffirming the safety of this great Ontario product.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON JUSTICE POLICY

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on Justice Policy and move its adoption.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Tonia Grannum): Your committee begs to report the following bill without amendment:

Bill 155, An Act to permit the Province to recover damages and health care costs incurred because of tobacco related diseases and to make a complementary amendment to the Limitations Act, 2002 / *Projet de loi 155, Loi autorisant la province à recouvrer le montant des dommages et du coût des soins de santé engagés en raison des maladies liées au tabac et à apporter une modification complémentaire à la Loi de 2002 sur la prescription des actions.*

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed? Agreed.

Report adopted.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The bill is therefore ordered for third reading.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL POLICY

Ms. Laurel C. Broten: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on Social Policy and move its adoption.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Tonia Grannum): Your committee begs to report the following bill as amended:

Bill 157, An Act to amend the Education Act / Projet de loi 157, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'éducation.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed? Agreed.

Report adopted.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The bill is therefore ordered for third reading.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

ONTARIO COLLEGE OF TRADES AND APPRENTICESHIP ACT, 2009

LOI DE 2009 SUR L'ORDRE DES MÉTIERS DE L'ONTARIO ET L'APPRENTISSAGE

Mr. Milloy moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 183, An Act to revise and modernize the law related to apprenticeship training and trades qualifications and to establish the Ontario College of Trades / Projet de loi 183, Loi visant à réviser et à moderniser le droit relatif à la formation en apprentissage et aux qualifications professionnelles et à créer l'Ordre des métiers de l'Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The minister for a short statement?

Hon. John Milloy: During ministerial statements, Mr. Speaker.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

SKILLED TRADES MÉTIERS SPÉCIALISÉS

Hon. John Milloy: I'm pleased today to introduce some important legislation for Ontario's skilled trades and apprenticeship system, legislation that would establish the Ontario College of Trades, an independent regulatory college for the skilled trades.

The proposed Ontario College of Trades and Apprenticeship Act represents a significant step forward to promote careers in skilled trades and modernize the province's apprenticeship and skilled trades system. The skilled trades sector plays an important part in Ontario's economic prosperity, and I would like to take a moment to acknowledge the many, many representatives of the sector who were able to join us today—far too many to single out, but we have a cross-section from across the province, and I think I speak on behalf of all members when I welcome you here today.

1520

The college of trades would put this sector more in charge of its own business. It would help the apprenticeship and skilled trades system better serve consumers, employers, apprentices and skilled tradespeople, and it would raise the status of our skilled tradespeople, putting them on a similar footing with teachers, doctors and nurses, who all have their own professional regulatory colleges.

This proposed legislation would retain important elements but replace the existing Apprenticeship and Certification Act and the Trades Qualification and Apprenticeship Act, standardizing governance for the sector.

L'Ordre des métiers de l'Ontario que nous proposons représente une approche équilibrée, une institution de gouvernance conçue pour faire passer l'intérêt public avant tout, tout en prenant en compte les intérêts de tous les groupes évoluant dans le milieu des métiers spécialisés et de l'apprentissage.

Ce projet de loi représente la concrétisation, au moment prévu, d'un engagement que nous avons pris l'année dernière, un engagement que nous avons pris après avoir reçu des conseils experts, un engagement important pour notre gouvernement. C'est pourquoi nous souhaitons nous assurer de bien faire les choses.

Creating the Ontario College of Trades would fill a need, identified nearly a year ago, to ensure that industry has a more prominent role in recruitment, governance, certification and apprenticeship training.

We know that times are hard for many of our skilled workers. That's why we've increased retraining support for laid-off workers. Many of those workers are training for careers in the skilled trades, and that's why we have improved incentives to make it easier for employers to hire apprentices.

But as Ontario moves toward economic recovery—and make no mistake, Ontario will recover—it's especially important that we prepare to succeed in a more competitive economic future. Governing the skilled trades through an independent regulatory college is an approach unique to Ontario that would fully recognize the sector's expertise.

We've come up with this model after careful consideration. In August 2007, we asked Mr. Tim Armstrong, a respected public policy adviser, lawyer, author and recipient of the Order of Ontario, to review compulsory certification in the skilled trades. He was asked to study

the possible implications of expanding compulsory certification to health and safety for consumers and for the economy.

Tim Armstrong brought extensive public policy experience in apprenticeship, trades and labour relations to the task. Among many career highlights, he practised law in Toronto for 16 years, specializing in labour and other administrative law litigation, and served in the Ontario government for 18 years, including terms as deputy minister of the Ministry of Labour and of the former Ministry of Industry, Trade and Technology.

When he reported back to us last May, following extensive public consultations and research, he suggested that we could not adequately address compulsory certification without looking at other aspects of the system, and he made several recommendations to that end.

A key recommendation was to establish a college of trades: an independent, all trades governance institution. Our government accepted Mr. Armstrong's recommendation, and in September we indicated that we would move forward with the college.

To do this, we appointed Mr. Kevin Whitaker, chair of the Ontario Labour Relations Board, as implementation adviser. He was asked to provide advice and recommendations regarding the college's proposed governance structure, scope and mandate.

Both Mr. Armstrong and Mr. Whitaker are with us here today, and I would like to take this opportunity to thank them for their hard work.

In addition, I would like to acknowledge many officials who are here from TCU, who have also worked very, very hard through the public consultations and the preparation that led to the introduction of today's legislation, and thank them for their hard work.

Mr. Whitaker has extensive experience in labour arbitration and mediation in both the private and public sectors and across a wide variety of professions. He was well qualified to work with the sector to create a model that could effectively serve a balance of interests. He made recommendations after consulting broadly with employers, skilled tradespeople and training providers through submissions, meetings and regional public consultations. These recommendations are reflected in the legislation we are introducing today.

If this legislation is passed, the college of trades would be phased in over time and be fully implemented by 2012. The college of trades would work with all skilled trades partners, including employers and skilled tradespeople, apprentices and training providers, and other sector experts. The college would work with these interests to serve the public interest.

It would have a mandate to seek ways of attracting more people to the trades, especially youth and underrepresented groups. It would help make it easier for internationally trained workers to get certified and find work in the trades in Ontario. It would be responsible for setting training and certification standards to serve the skilled trades sector and Ontarians who use their services. It would be responsible for conducting research to make

sure Ontario has the right workers for the future. It would give the sector ownership of critical decisions on issues such as compulsory certification and apprenticeship ratios, using objective criteria to make balanced decisions across the trades.

Our ministry would retain some responsibilities, including approving and funding training providers. The ministry would also continue to perform operational duties, such as registering training agreements for apprentices and conducting certification exams. The government would also continue to administer programs such as the Ontario youth apprenticeship program and the apprenticeship training tax credit.

Our government is committed to bringing Ontario into the skills and knowledge economy. We know that encouraging apprenticeship is essential to Ontario's future prosperity. Ontario's labour force growth is projected to decline as greater numbers of workers prepare to retire and fewer young people enter the workforce.

Ontarians recognize this is a challenge that we have to face head-on, and they support encouraging youth towards careers in the skilled trades. We have already taken significant steps to ensure Ontario has the skilled workers it needs for the future. We are attracting youth and underrepresented groups, such as women, aboriginal Ontarians and persons with disabilities, to apprenticeship through innovative programs. We're encouraging employers to hire apprentices through incentives, and we're increasing these incentives to help weather the economic downturn. We're helping Ontario's training providers with infrastructure investments.

These actions have produced results. Today there are 120,000 active apprentices learning a trade in Ontario, over 60,000 more than in 2003. New annual apprenticeship registrations have increased from 17,100 in 2003 to more than 28,000 in 2008.

But it is time to do more. It is important for our economy. The proposed Ontario College of Trades would build on our success by giving the sector a more active and a more significant role. Our government believes that modernizing our skilled trades and apprenticeship sector is vital. We believe that establishing the Ontario College of Trades would advance the public interest and better serve our skilled trades and apprenticeship sector. It's just one more step toward transforming Ontario's economy so our businesses and our families can take advantage of the next generation of growth.

POLICE WEEK

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: Good afternoon, Mr. Speaker. It is my privilege to rise in the House today and remind my fellow members that Sunday, May 10, was the launch of Police Week in the province of Ontario.

For almost 30 years, Police Week has been observed in May to coincide with the international Peace Officers Memorial Day on May 15. International Peace Officers Memorial Day is a day to pay tribute to law enforcement officers and to honour the memories of those who died in the line of duty.

1530

His Excellency Lieutenant Governor David C. Onley and Premier Dalton McGuinty paid tribute to Ontario's fallen officers at the Ontario Police Memorial on May 3—a very moving ceremony that takes place every year on the first Sunday in May. I'm certain all members are familiar with one of Sir Robert Peel's most famous quotations: "The police are the public, and the public are the police." I believe that Police Week brings life to his words.

Police Week is intended to strengthen the link between the police and our communities by focusing on a particular social issue or crime-related topic that police and communities can work to resolve together.

This year's theme for Police Week, "Policing Possibilities: Inspiration for the Future," will help to build on public support. This theme was developed with the help of the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police, and I would like to thank interim president Chief Dan Parkinson and the OACP for, once again, rising to the challenge. It speaks of bringing the police and public closer together and exploring new possibilities for maintaining the peace while helping to build tomorrow's communities, and it inspires a new generation of Ontarians to consider the rewards and unlimited potential of policing when charting their own path for the future.

Between now and Saturday, May 16, police services and their boards across Ontario will be commemorating this special week with a variety of public activities recognizing the dedication of all police personnel and the contribution they make to our communities.

The McGuinty government values our police, the professional work they do and the sacrifices they are making on our behalf. We support a police service that reflects the diversity of our province and applaud recruiting efforts that move us closer to that goal.

Police Week is a time for communities across Ontario to connect with their police services. It's a time to pause and thank those brave men and women who have served and honour those who serve us still.

I hope all members will show their support for our police officers by participating in their local Police Week activities.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Responses?

SKILLED TRADES

Mr. Jim Wilson: I'm pleased to respond to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities' announcement today.

Self-regulation is a plan that has demonstrated itself to be a useful way of standardizing rules in many fields, from architects to accountants and chiropractors to dietitians and lawyers to midwives, but there's a back story to this new government scheme. I don't need to tell anyone in this House, save for the Liberals, about the potential dangers of a self-regulating organization like the Ontario College of Trades that has been stacked with special interests.

Red flags should go off when you look to what this government did with the College of Teachers after they were first elected. They took the proven idea of self-regulation, which has been used successfully in many fields, and perverted it for their own personal ends. The College of Teachers is now a union-led tool for promoting union interests, regardless of the impact on teachers, students or taxpayers.

I think we can all look at the McGuinty record and confidently predict that he will do the exact same thing with the college of trades, and there's evidence to suggest this. In an effort to maintain Ontario's artificially high apprentice-to-journeyman ratios, the minister used provincial advisory committees, groups that he appoints under the Trades Qualification and Apprenticeship Act, to justify his unreasonably high ratios. As I've said in this House before, the minister stacked those committees with his buddies, who have a vested interest in keeping those ratios high, without consideration for the broader public interest.

Take the boilermakers' PAC: It's heavily stacked with representatives from the boilermakers' union, Local 128. It's the same with the drywallers, acoustic and lathing applicator PAC. This is stacked with members of the United Brotherhood of Carpenters, with only token business interests.

We can only assume that the government will use the college of trades just like they used their PACs and the College of Teachers and pervert this for their own political ends by handing control over the trades to special interests instead of the government protecting the public interest, which is its job.

Let there be no mistake about it: The driving force behind this legislation comes from members of the Working Families Coalition, who are intimate friends of this government and who have worked with the Liberals to carefully craft rules and programs to exclude anyone who is not in their club. For them, it's not about fairness or safety or jobs for people; it's about whether or not you play ball with the government and their friends. If you do, the sky's the limit, and if you don't, welcome to the brick wall.

So I and my colleagues in the PC caucus will be taking time to review this legislation very cautiously. If passed, we certainly will be watching for the implementation of the college and making sure that it's done in a fair way to all of those concerned, especially our young apprentices who are locked out of jobs right now because of this government's stubbornness on the apprenticeship ratios.

POLICE WEEK

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I'm pleased to respond today, on behalf of our caucus, to the minister's comments on Police Week. I have to begin by thanking the minister for not attacking the federal government today. Usually when you stand up it's always about the \$156 million.

The minister made an announcement last week. It was up in Rama, at Mnjikaning First Nation police service. I

got a copy of it, which I'm going to send over. The clippings you've probably already seen. But it was funny that he made it at that place, because it's probably the most luxurious police service detachment or precinct that we could find anywhere in the world, let alone just here in Ontario. I know he didn't really bring a lot of attention to it, but it was federal money he announced for the 40 new officers for police services across the province.

I would like to also briefly mention, because it is Police Week—it's amazing that today, with the demonstration outside, we do see a number of officers from different police services around Ontario protecting the building here, and keeping law and order outside with this peaceful demonstration out there. I want to thank those police officers as well.

I want to also say that in my riding—and I would encourage other ridings to do the same—I work with my federal member. At the end of May of each year—this year it'll be on Sunday, May 31—we hold a protective services appreciation barbecue in the riding of Simcoe North. It's for all police officers and their families, firemen, paramedics and those involved with the military. I would encourage other members to do that as well. It works out very well because these officers from all these different organizations don't often get to meet each other. The reality, though, is that they do appreciate when they get together. They compare notes and are appreciative of the fact that some of their politicians do recognize their work.

So I want to say, on behalf of our caucus, thank you very much to all the police officers who, day in and day out, put their life on the line so we can live in a wonderful province like Ontario.

POLICE WEEK

Mr. Peter Kormos: New Democrats join in celebrating our police officers: women and men across this province who serve their communities, protecting property and protecting lives. I say policing has never been more demanding. In many respects, it's never been more dangerous. The standard of training of police officers in this province has never been greater, and we are blessed to have police officers who are very skilled in all facets of their demanding jobs.

But let's use this occasion to note that increasingly communities live in fear of gunfire. Just recently, in west Toronto, a 14-year-old boy was gunned down, shot dead. In that west Toronto community people are fleeing, literally selling homes, because they want to escape the violence being imposed on their neighbourhoods by, in many cases, younger people. All these are not youth who have gone astray; these are full-blown sociopaths who will take a life in the snap of a finger.

I believe that if we truly want to celebrate the work that our police officers do, we want to make sure our cops have the tools and the resources they need—including the staffing—to track down those who would use firearms in the commission of crimes and those who

would shoot others, including innocent bystanders; to ensure that sufficient evidence is obtained to prosecute them; and then to ensure, along with adequate components of crown attorneys and court staff, that these people are prosecuted and that, by God, they're given the stiffest sentences that anybody could ever be given. Again, we're not talking wayward youth; we're talking about gangsters, thugs, hoodlums who are taking lives indiscriminately, and I believe it's time for us to become incredibly angry and regard this with the repugnance that it deserves and, in the course of doing that, make sure that the cops have the support of the community in tracking these offenders down and dealing with them severely.

1540

SKILLED TRADES

Mr. Rosario Marchese: New Democrats welcome the debate on the college of trades. We won't be able to do justice to this debate in a couple of minutes, but we will have time in the course of second reading debate and also committee hearings to be able to look more closely to what is contained in the bill, which we just received about half an hour ago, and we look forward to that.

The Auditor General has raised a number of questions that the ministry has not, in my view, dealt adequately with, and maybe the college of trades will do it. He says that the ministry increased apprenticeship opportunities and registrations, but was less successful in ensuring apprentices complete training. Expenditures increased 25% since 2002 and the number of registered apprentices more than doubled to 109,000, but the ministry lacked information on completion, employment rates and reasons why a high percentage of apprentices fail to complete training. By the way, that's fewer than half completing and becoming certified.

The auditor also says that staff say there's too much emphasis on registration over certification. Training consultants at the field offices were concerned over their inability to conduct program monitoring visits. The priority was meeting apprenticeship registration targets.

He also said that there's lack of strategies to increase registration in high-demand skilled trades. Most registration increase has been in the expanding service sector—and, by way of an aside, the third-highest number of people registering in the trades are hair stylists, who may be in high demand, I have no doubt. But in terms of those manufacturing sectors that are desperately looking for high-skilled workers, I don't know how we're filling that demand. And there's lack of coordination in safety enforcement efforts.

Tim Armstrong, who is here today, said in his report from 2008 that the requirements for compulsory certification will not be fully effective unless there are comprehensive enforcement mechanisms with meaningful sanctions to deter widespread contraventions. We hope that the college of trades will do that.

I have to end by saying that when the minister says that if this legislation is passed, the college of trades

would be phased in over time and fully implemented by 2012, I don't consider that leadership. Why is it that we can't do it today? Why do we have to wait until the government is unelected in 2011 and wait for 2012 for this to happen? Why can't we have leadership and make this happen immediately?

PETITIONS

HEALTH CARE

Mr. Robert Bailey: This petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care should recognize the importance of rural health care in Ontario; and

"Whereas the Erie St. Clair Local Health Integration Network commissioned a report by the Hay Group that recommends downgrading the emergency room at the Charlotte Eleanor Englehart (CEE) Hospital in Petrolia to an urgent-care ward; and

"Whereas, if accepted, that recommendation would increase the demand on emergency room services in Sarnia; and ...

"Whereas the Petrolia medical community has stated that the loss of this emergency room will result in the loss of many of our local doctors; and

"Whereas Petrolia's retirement and nursing home communities are dependent on easy access to the CEE hospital;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to urge the Erie St. Clair Local Health Integration Network to completely reject the report of the Hay Group and leave the emergency room designation at Charlotte Eleanor Englehart Hospital in Petrolia."

I agree with this petition, affix my name and will send it with Eric.

CEMETERIES

Mr. Jim Brownell: I have a petition signed by a number of residents from Ottawa, and it reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontario's cemeteries are an important part of our cultural heritage, and Ontario's inactive cemeteries are constantly at risk of closure and removal; and

"Ontario's cemeteries are an irreplaceable part of the province's cultural heritage;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"The government must pass Bill 149, the Inactive Cemeteries Protection Act, 2009, to prohibit the relocation of inactive cemeteries in the province of Ontario."

As I agree with this petition, I shall sign it and send it to the clerks' table.

TAXATION

Mr. Jim Wilson: I want to thank Gordon and Carolyn Pitt of Collingwood for sending this petition to me.

"Whereas the hard-working residents of Simcoe-Grey do not want a harmonized sales tax (HST) that will raise the cost of goods and services they use every day; and

"Whereas the 13% blended sales tax will cause everyone to pay more for, to name just a few, gasoline for their cars, heat, telephone, cable and Internet services for their homes, for house sales over \$400,000, fast food under \$4, electricity, newspapers, magazines, stamps, theatre admissions, footwear less than \$30, home renovations, gym fees, audio books for the blind, funeral services, snow-ploughing, air conditioning repairs, commercial property rentals, real estate commissions, dry cleaning, car washes, manicures, Energy Star appliances, veterinarian bills, bus fares, golf fees, arena ice rentals, moving vans, grass cutting, furnace repairs, domestic air travel, train fares, tobacco, bicycles and legal services; and

"Whereas the blended sales tax will affect everyone in the province: seniors, students, families and low-income Ontarians;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the McGuinty Liberal government not increase taxes for Ontario consumers."

I agree with this petition and I've signed it.

ROAD SAFETY

Mr. Paul Miller: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the recently passed Bill 41 with regard to speed limiters on heavy trucks was passed without considering the effect on traffic flow, safety concerns and interstate trucking; and

"Whereas the speed of 105 kilometres per hour creates a dangerous situation on our 400-series highways with consideration to the average speed of traffic flow being 120 kilometres per hour;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Legislature suspend enforcement of the speed limiter law until the Legislature can review all studies conducted pertaining to the effect of this law and road safety concerns; and

"That the Ontario speed limiter law be amended from 105 kilometres per hour to 120 kilometres per hour to remove the increased risk of collisions on our highways and to prevent infringement on interstate trucking out of province and country."

I will sign my name to this, as I agree with this petition, and will be giving it to Cameron.

SCHOOL FACILITIES

Mr. Phil McNeely: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas St. Matthew Catholic High School is currently operating at 137% capacity and has been overcrowded for many years; and

"Whereas the Ottawa Catholic school board's capital plan identifies building an addition to St. Matthew Catholic High School as necessary (contingent on provincial grants) and planned for 2008; and

"Whereas the province of Ontario does not currently have a model to fund capital additions where school boards are not in debt and where these schools are in established communities and not part of the board's educational development charges bylaw;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To immediately transfer to the Ottawa Catholic school board the necessary funds to design and build the planned addition to St. Matthew Catholic High School in Orléans."

I will send this up with Grace.

TAXATION

Mr. Gerry Martiniuk: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty said he wouldn't raise taxes in the 2003 election, but in 2004 he brought in the health tax, the biggest tax hike in Ontario's history;" but still cut health care services and nurses, "and

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty will increase taxes yet again" on Canada Day 2010 "with his new 13% combined sales tax, at a time when families and businesses can least afford it; and

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty's new 13% combined sales tax will increase the cost of goods and services that families and businesses buy every day, such as: coffee, newspapers and magazines, gas at the pumps, home heating oil and electricity, postage stamps, haircuts, dry cleaning, home renovations, veterinary care, and arena ice and soccer field rentals," Internet fees, theatre admissions, funerals, courier fees, fast food sold for \$4, bus fares, golf green fees, gym fees, snowploughing, bicycles, taxi fares, train fares, domestic air travel, accountant services and real estate commissions;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That Dalton McGuinty wake up to Ontario's current economic reality and stop raising taxes, once and for all, on Ontario's hard-working families and businesses."

As I agree with it and support the petition, I affix my name thereto.

AIR QUALITY

Mr. Charles Sousa: I have a petition that reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ministry of the Environment conducted 22 months of ambient air monitoring and determined that

the Clarkson, Mississauga, airshed study area was taxed for respirable particulate matter (PM2.5); and ...

"Whereas the study found that emissions of acrolein and acrylonitrile exceeded provincial limits; and ...

"Whereas the Ontario Power Authority is accepting proposals from companies for the operation of a gas-fired power plant in the Clarkson airshed study area that would see a new, very significant source of additional pollution into an airshed already determined as stressed by the MOE;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That no contract be awarded by the Ontario Power Authority for the operation of any gas-fired power plant that would impact the Clarkson airshed study area."

I will sign it and provide it to Lindsay.

1550

EDUCATION

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty said he would increase high school graduation rates to 85% and increase test scores in reading, writing and math, he is doing so by:

"Allowing a student to miss a test (whether they skip class or are sick) and they must not be given a zero;

"Allowing a student to cheat on a test or hand in plagiarized work, resulting in the evaluation not being valid, and they must not be given zero;

"Allowing students to ignore deadlines on assignments knowing that they cannot be penalized for late work;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Dalton McGuinty government amend their present policy on assessment and evaluation and allow students to learn about time management, importance of honesty, hard work and responsibility."

I agree with the petition, and I will sign it and give it to Eric.

ONTARIO BUDGET

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: I have a petition that's addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and it reads as follows:

"Whereas the McGuinty government's 2009 budget aims to pull Ontario out of difficult economic times by investing in people through various forms of job creation and tax relief measures;

"Whereas this budget demonstrates compassion for Ontario's poor, traditionally the hardest hit constituent during difficult economic times, by pursuing programs that increase the minimum wage, provide needed tax relief and fast-forward the Ontario child tax credit by implementing this one year ahead of schedule;

"Whereas the opposition parties have failed to appreciate the difficulty of these economic times by failing to

provide constructive and meaningful ideas in lieu of criticism for the sake of criticism;

"Whereas partisanship has reached an all-time high and is overshadowing real concerns that are affecting Ontarians in a meaningful and significant way;

"We, the undersigned, therefore request that the Legislative Assembly of Ontario improve the level of debate and decorum by focusing on issues that affect Ontarians."

I agree with this petition and affix my signature to it.

TAXATION

Mrs. Julia Munro: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty said he wouldn't raise taxes in the 2003 election, but in 2004 he brought in the health tax, the biggest tax hike in Ontario's history; and

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty will increase taxes yet again with his new 13% combined sales tax, at a time when families and businesses can least afford it; and

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty's new 13% sales tax will increase the cost of goods and services that families and businesses buy every day, such as coffee, newspapers and magazines, gas at the pumps, home heating oil and electricity, postage stamps, haircuts, dry cleaning, home renovations, veterinary care, and arena ice and soccer field rentals;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Dalton McGuinty government wake up to Ontario's current economic reality and stop raising taxes, once and for all, on Ontario's hard-working families and businesses."

As I am in complete agreement, I've affixed my signature to this.

ROAD SAFETY

Mr. Peter Kormos: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the recently passed Bill 41 with regard to speed limiters on heavy trucks was passed without considering the effect on traffic flow, safety concerns and interstate trucking; and

"Whereas the speed of 105 kilometres per hour creates a dangerous situation on our 400-series highways with consideration to the average speed of traffic flow being 120 kilometres per hour;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Legislature suspend enforcement of the speed limiter law until the Legislature can review all studies conducted pertaining to the effect of this law and road safety concerns; and

"That the Ontario speed limiter law be amended from 105 kilometres per hour to 120 kilometres per hour to remove the increased risk of collisions on our highways and to prevent infringement on interstate trucking out of province and country."

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Bob Delaney: I have a petition here addressed to the Ontario Legislative Assembly, and I especially want to thank Sharmin Thaver of Dalebrook Crescent in Streetsville for having sent it to me and for being one of those who signed it. It reads as follows:

"Whereas wait times for access to surgical procedures in the western GTA area served by the Mississauga Halton LHIN are growing despite the ongoing capital project activity at the hospitals within the Mississauga Halton LHIN boundaries; and

"Whereas 'day surgery' procedures could be performed in an off-site facility. An ambulatory surgery centre would greatly increase the ability of surgeons to perform more procedures, reduce wait times for patients and free up operating theatre space in hospitals for more complex procedures that may require post-operative intensive care unit support and a longer length of stay in hospital;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care allocate funds in its 2009-10 capital budget to begin planning and construction of an ambulatory surgery centre located in western Mississauga to serve the Mississauga-Halton area and enable greater access to 'day surgery' procedures that comprise about four fifths of all surgical procedures performed."

I'm pleased to sign and support this and ask page Rabeb to carry it for me.

TAXATION

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm pleased to present a petition from my riding of Durham, which reads as follows:

"Whereas Premier Dalton McGuinty said he wouldn't raise taxes in the 2003 election, but in 2004 he brought in the" dreaded "health tax, the biggest tax hike in Ontario's history;" but he still cuts health care services and nurses; "and

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty will increase taxes yet again" on Canada Day 2010 "with his new 13% combined sales tax at a time when families and businesses can least afford it; and

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty's new 13% combined sales tax will increase the cost of goods and services that families and businesses buy every day, such as"—there's a very long list here, but it's worth repeating—"coffee, newspapers and magazines, gas at the pump, home heating oil and electricity, postage stamps, haircuts, dry cleaning, home renovations, veterinary care, arena ice and soccer field rentals," Internet service, theatre admissions, funerals—imagine that—real estate commissions, accounting services—at this time of year with people doing their income tax—domestic air travel, train fare, taxi fare, bicycles, snowplowing, grass cutting, green fees, golf fees, bus fares, fast food for \$4, courier fees—the list goes on;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Dalton McGuinty government wake up to Ontario's current economic reality and stop raising taxes, once and for all, on Ontario's hard-working families and businesses."

I'm pleased to sign this in support and present it to Lindsay, one of the pages who will be leaving in two days.

CHILD CUSTODY

Mr. Jim Brownell: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"We, the people of Ontario, deserve and have the right to request an amendment to the Children's Law Reform Act to emphasize the importance of children's relationships with their parents and grandparents...."

"Whereas subsection 20(2.1) requires parents and others with custody of children to refrain from unreasonably placing obstacles to personal relations between the children and their grandparents; and

"Whereas subsection 24(2) contains a list of matters that a court must consider when determining the best interests of a child. The bill amends that subsection to include a specific reference to the importance of maintaining emotional ties between children and grandparents; and

"Whereas subsection 24(2.1) requires a court that is considering custody of or access to a child to give effect to the principle that a child should have as much contact with each parent and grandparent as is consistent with the best interests of the child; and

"Whereas subsection 24(2.2) requires a court that is considering custody of a child to take into consideration each applicant's willingness to facilitate as much contact between the child and each parent and grandparent as is consistent with the best interests of the child;

"We, the undersigned, hereby petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to amend the Children's Law Reform Act as above to emphasize the importance of children's relationships with their parents and grandparents."

As I agree with this petition, I shall sign it and send it to the Clerk's table.

1600

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GREEN ENERGY AND GREEN ECONOMY ACT, 2009

LOI DE 2009 SUR L'ÉNERGIE VERTE ET L'ÉCONOMIE VERTE

Resuming the debate adjourned on May 12, 2009, on the motion for third reading of Bill 150, An Act to enact the Green Energy Act, 2009 and to build a green

economy, to repeal the Energy Conservation Leadership Act, 2006 and the Energy Efficiency Act and to amend other statutes.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mr. Robert Bailey: It's a pleasure for me to rise today to speak to third reading of Bill 150, the Green Energy Act. From the beginning, the members of our caucus have had some serious concerns with this bill. The first is we know that costs for consumers will certainly increase. We also believe that this is an intrusive piece of legislation that is nothing more than a new tax on families and businesses in Ontario.

This bill will directly increase the cost of doing business in Ontario. This government doesn't seem to worry about increasing the costs of doing business in Ontario. They have never met a regulation they didn't like. Bill 150 will increase bureaucracy and red tape in Ontario, which will further stifle business and activity.

Our caucus recommended an economic impact study on the Green Energy Act to be done by London Economics International. What London Economics International found was that as a result of the Green Energy Act, costs to each household in Ontario will increase between \$247 and \$631 on average per year between 2010 and 2025. This means the costs could increase by as much as \$1,200 per household in 2025. This is the equivalent of between two and six additional monthly electricity bills. The government refuses to accept that. Of course, they have not done any kind of study that would show the economic impact of the Green Energy Act. All they say is, "Trust us. It will all work out."

One thing the government says, but can't seem to back up, is that the Green Energy Act will create 50,000 jobs. They don't say where or how much these jobs will pay. I'd also like to remind the listeners that 38,000, at a max., were employed in the energy industry as a whole in Ontario in 2007-08. Also, 35,000 were employed in the auto sector and related industries: suppliers etc. Those are industries that are 80 and 100 years old and took all those years to employ those numbers, yet the government would have us believe that with this Green Energy Act, they're going to employ 50,000. So I'll leave that to the listeners and my fellow members who are here today to ponder and see if they really believe that those 50,000 jobs will be created.

We have done a bit of work on that and found out that 40% of those jobs will be in construction of new transmission and distribution lines and updates. In other words, these are short-term, temporary jobs. Important as they are, they are not long-term and sustaining.

There are other jobs that are going to be created. These will be inspectors armed with sweeping powers to monitor your energy efficiency. I have referred to them more than once as the toaster police. They would be monitoring the types of appliances used in people's homes. If they found out you were using something that wasn't up to code, they would have powers to enter and seize. Aunt Molly would be cooking her English muffin in the so-called microwave or toaster oven, and if it

didn't meet the code, they'd be able to come in, yank the plug out and take it away on her: unwarranted entry.

Dalton McGuinty helped create this economic crisis that we're in and now he wants us to believe that this bill will help solve it. I don't think anything could be further from the truth. This bill will put up the price of energy, making it more expensive for households. This is done to fund more expensive energy and to fund pet projects of the Premier and the energy minister.

Through the committee process, we heard from many different stakeholders who are all concerned about wind turbines and the troubles that they can cause. Many people raised very legitimate concerns about the health effects of living near wind turbines. Our health critic, the member for Kitchener-Waterloo, asked for mandatory health impact studies to be done in areas around potential wind farms, and the government refused.

We don't think that that is responsible. You also have to look at the viability of wind turbines. According to an article I read in yesterday's National Post, most wind turbines run at, at best, 25% of rated capacity. That means they need backup capacity for 70% of the time they're not running. If you are paying all this money for green electricity and only getting it 20% of the time, I think you are wasting valuable resources.

The cost of wind power is two and a half times the cost of other forms of electricity. That's according to the Royal Academy of Engineering in the United Kingdom. Under the Green Energy Act, the proposed feed-in tariff for wind power projects is twice the prevailing electricity rate. So we would be no better off here. Our consumers, at the end of the day, will pay more.

Of course, in Sarnia-Lambton we are living with other foolishness of this government's energy policy. In my riding, we have the Lambton generating station, which employs upwards of 400 people directly and another 600 indirectly from time to time. Under this government's current electricity scheme, this plant will be closed entirely by 2014. This would contribute to an impact on the local economy in the range of \$300 million a year in losses of payroll, downstream jobs and infrastructure and also to the local economies.

This decision to close the Lambton generating station has had implications as well for St. Clair township, the host municipality of the generating station. You see, since the government has said that in 2014 this plant will close, MPAC has therefore slashed the assessed value of the generating station by over 50%, which has caused the revenues for the St. Clair township to drop dramatically—upwards of \$2 million, which is paid into the local economy through the property tax.

It's bad enough that my riding is losing a lot of jobs, but this has an impact for all over Ontario. Right now, this generating station produces some of the cheapest and cleanest electricity possible. When the Lambton generating station goes offline, the government has not been able to assure anyone that they will have built enough generating capacity to make up for this lost generation. We can conserve so much, but in the end generation

needs to be replaced, and no one seems to have a plan in place to generate that needed electricity.

Another article that I was reading yesterday was called "The Myth of the Danish Green Energy 'Miracle.'"

"Data from the International Energy Agency shows that the cost of residential electricity in Denmark in 2007 was 34 cents US per kilowatt hour—the highest in Europe. All comparisons include taxes.... We also know that the proposed feed-in-tariff for wind power in Ontario is twice the prevailing electricity rate and will cost consumers hundreds of dollars more...." This same Royal Academy, according to the author of this article, "estimated that the cost of wind power is two and a half times" to three times "the cost of other ... electricity."

They've also talked about wind generation: "This statement is totally disingenuous. Most wind turbines run at 25% of rated capacity.... And because of their unpredictability, they require spinning reserves all the time, while conventional forms of electricity generation typically run at 75% to 95% of capacity utilization...."

"Transposing the Danish experience to an Ontario context, in 2008, 75% of Ontario's electricity generation output was produced by carbon-free hydro and nuclear generation ... and about 15% by coal-fired generation...."

Those who say they believe in the wind "should ask themselves: If wind power has no significant impact on the problem we are trying to solve (i.e., CO2 emissions); if wind power costs two to three times as much as conventional sources of energy; if wind power kills twice as many jobs as it creates through its higher costs ... then why would any right-minded person accept this invitation? We should also ask our politicians this question."

Another gentleman, by the name of Michael Trebilcock, a professor of law and economics at the University of Toronto, points to Denmark, saying that the European leader in wind development has also had problems with this. Spiegel Online argued the point that wind, despite all the hype, is failing Europe. The headline of the article reads, "Wind Turbines in Europe Do Nothing for Emissions-Reduction Goals...."

"Wind turbines don't operate all the time, so you've to back them up with natural gas" plants, "says ... an activist with Wind Concerns Ontario and a professional engineer who used to work for" OPG.

"Wind critics routinely claim that a megawatt of back-up generation based on natural gas is required for every one-megawatt wind turbine that's connected to the grid. The idea is that when the wind does stop blowing, the natural gas plant can be fired up quickly to compensate.

"Without a costly, 100% back-up system, the grid" that is so important to Ontario "becomes dangerously unreliable...."

There will be "a penalty for using natural gas this way. Akin to stop-and-start traffic reducing car mileage, constantly increasing and decreasing the output of a natural gas plant affects its efficiency, meaning more gas is burned for the megawatt-hours that are produced...."

"There's no doubt that over time, wind generation will represent ... a large part of the power mix" in Ontario, but

backup generation will also eventually be required to meet that.

1610

The one main point that I want to speak about is the cost: Is capturing wind today worth the price we pay? "Those opposed to the development of industrial wind farms argue that wind is simply uncompetitive without massive subsidies, and that taxpayers shouldn't be saddled with the cost.

"In Ontario, the power authority has been directed to pay 13.5 cents for every kilowatt-hour of wind energy generated under a standard 20-year contract.... This excludes any cost of additional transmission and backup generation that's required."

This author has called wind generation "a good example of what can go wrong when governments pick winners." We all know where that was spoken about earlier last week.

"But comparing the price paid for wind power today against the price paid for electricity generated largely from investments made 25 to 100 years ago ignores the fact that wind or no wind, the cost of power generation in the years to come is going up—no matter what technology we choose"....

Today, nobody knows the true cost of a nuclear plant, "but best estimates today place it at \$7,000 per megawatt of installed capacity. That works out to" approximately "\$21 billion for a 3,000-megawatt plant...." Wind capacity would cost about \$18 billion, and the gas plants that would be there to back it up would be about \$3 billion, so the capital costs would be roughly the same.

Now to go back to where I was before, as far as the Lambton generating station, which is important to my riding, there are many options that we could look at there—biomass, and they're doing studies of that, I know, around Ontario; and the OPG has even authorized some of these at Lambton. They're looking at various crops that they could use to take the place of coal or a mix of coal. I can't think of the name of it right now. They should be running pilot projects that use biomass instead of coal to generate this electricity.

Recently, the Minister of Energy came to the area, to my adjacent riding, and accused me of being a bad listener because I was standing up for the Lambton generating station and local jobs in my riding. I would say quite clearly to the minister that I'm going to keep listening to the people who sent me here and who think that the Lambton generating station can play a part in the Ontario electrical industry. I also invited the minister back again any time, because I got some of the greatest press coverage I have had for a long time. I was hoping he could come back again any time and comment on my behaviour.

Everyone wants to support green energy. We all want carbon dioxide emissions reduced, but I like to look at some facts. In 2008, 75% of Ontario's electricity generation was produced by carbon-free hydro and nuclear, and about 15% by coal generation. Under the Green Energy Act, it is entirely possible that wind power or other forms of green energy will displace that lower-cost,

carbon-free generation, or it will be produced in addition to it and sold at a loss to our American neighbours—this, all according to today's National Post.

At committee, the government at least listened to us and took out the preposterous idea of mandatory home energy audits. That would have added costs to people buying and selling homes and would have been a direct drag and imposition on the real estate market. Of course, the Dalton sales tax will put a drag on the real estate market anyway, so maybe the government will see the light on this as well if we keep up the fight and point out the error of their ways.

When it comes to Bill 150, it's not just the direct costs that have my party concerned. There are other items as well that this legislation has direct input costs on. One of the indirect costs which I am particularly concerned about is the loss of local control when it comes to the siting of new generators. Under Bill 150, the government of Ontario has grabbed power from some of the municipalities to override planning decisions made locally when it come to the siting of new power generators. Our local municipalities, which are the closest to the voters who have put them there, are best positioned to decide where these facilities are located. They don't need people from Toronto or the urban-centric communities telling them where to put the generating sites. Many citizens will feel the loss of control and won't want to surrender that control.

Some facts about the Green Energy Act as I wrap up: An initial transmission investment of \$5 billion, paid by 4.2 million consumers, works out to approximately \$1,200 per consumer, which would be a 100% increase in their electricity bill. Spread over the years, that's probably about a 30% increase.

The bill intrudes into private real estate sales and creates draconian powers in the appliance business that I spoke about earlier. The bill adds yet another bureaucracy to the energy mix, and also takes away the rights of municipalities to represent their constituents and decide when and where the generation would be located, which I spoke about earlier.

In wrapping up, I would like to say, again, that everyone wants to be green. As our member for Durham said yesterday, we support cleaning up the environment, we support the green energy aspect of that, but there are many issues in this bill that we spoke about in committee, which we've presented petitions on and spoke about in the House, that we do not support. I just hope that as we implement this bill, we're able to make changes to it as time goes on and it won't drastically impact the economy of Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Ms. Laurel C. Broten: I'll take a few minutes to speak directly to some of the issues raised by my colleague opposite.

First of all, with respect to jobs, about one quarter of the 50,000 jobs anticipated to be created will be in construction, while another quarter is estimated to be in manufacturing and engineering.

A reference with respect to enforcement positions certainly does not bear out in the current form of legislation, as the inspection and search provisions related to home energy audits and minimum efficiency standards have been eliminated from the draft of the bill we are currently debating.

I want to speak directly to the issue with respect to the importance of examining European jurisdictions and the reality that has transpired in those jurisdictions, in particular, referencing countries such as Denmark and their use of wind power. I would commend the reading of an article by Tyler Hamilton, the energy reporter for the *Toronto Star*, which was published on May 12, 2009. In this article, a number of pieces of information that were advanced at committee, and have continued to be advanced throughout the debate, are rebuffed; in particular, that wind energy fails to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Here's a comment from Poul Erik Morthorst, a senior energy researcher at the National Laboratory for Sustainable Energy at the Technical University of Denmark:

"In recent years, we have seen quite a number of old plants being decommissioned, and this can partly be seen as a consequence of increased wind power capacity'....

"In 2007, for example, electricity generated from coal and natural gas fell 19 per cent and 26.6 per cent, respectively.... Renewable power, about 67 per cent of it from wind, increased 11.1 per cent."

The reality that has been advanced is not what is bearing out in Denmark, and we look forward to a green—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Thank you. Questions and comments?

Member for Sarnia-Lambton, you have up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. Robert Bailey: I'd like to thank the member for Etobicoke-Lakeshore for those comments. I would also like to quote from the *National Post*, from Michael Trebilcock. That's where I got some of my other comments. I didn't pick the same ones the honourable member from Etobicoke-Lakeshore picked; I picked the ones that supported my side of the argument—I think that's the way we do things here, right?

Mr. Trebilcock said, "It is important to understand why the Danish government," which commissioned the study, "is sensitive to critiques of the Danish experience with wind power. Denmark is home to Vestas, the world's largest wind turbine manufacturer, with 20,000 employees and a market share of between 20% and 25%. As the market for its turbines in Denmark and other European countries becomes saturated, it seeks to export the Danish experience worldwide. To this end, it recently ran a multi-million dollar global ad campaign with the slogan, 'Believe in the wind'...."

It's all about marketing. That's what I say. We know we need to move toward green energy in this province. We're doing that. Many people are doing that. What I'm saying is, let's not sacrifice those jobs in my riding and, I know, in many other ridings in north. We need to work at maintaining those. Whether we look at other crops—miscanthus was a crop they were experimenting with at

the Lambton generating station; they hope to have great advances with that. It's a bamboo-type crop, and I understand it could be grown on some of the poorer land in Ontario. It wouldn't take place in class 1, 2, 3 or 4 land; it could be grown on some of our poorer land. It would take a lot of acres—600,000 acres—I understand, to replace that coal, but it can be done. It's used in England and in other parts of Europe. I have seen some information on that as well.

1620

I appreciate the honourable member's comments, and I look forward to the rest of the debate.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I wanted to rise in the House today to address the flaws in Bill 150, the so-called Green Energy Act.

The government issued a news release on April 24 that said, "Ontarians have made hundreds of constructive suggestions to make the proposed Green Energy Act even more effective...." I want to congratulate the spin doctors in the Ministry of Energy and Infrastructure, because that's a really nice way of saying the government has received hundreds of complaints about the bill that they introduced. Perhaps the same spin doctors came up with the name of the bill, because it's a great name.

I want to start off by saying that I support the idea of green energy. We need to continue to look for more environmentally friendly and sustainable ways of doing things, but the key word here is "sustainable."

The title of the bill sounds great, but in spite of the name, it really isn't a sustainable plan for green energy in Ontario. Perhaps the minister should have spent a little bit more time on policy and development and a little less time on communications.

We believe it's important for the people of Ontario to understand, first of all, the full cost of Bill 150 before it's passed, and that the cost we have is backed up by research and data, not just a made-up number as we presently have. That's why the PC caucus commissioned London Economics International to research and prepare a report that looked at the cost impact of the bill.

I just wanted to touch on a couple of items in that report.

The first one is—this is in the summary of the report—"Analysis suggests that the Green Energy Act could cost each household between \$247 to \$631, on average, per year between 2010 and 2025." This means that the costs could increase by as much as \$1,200 a year per household by 2025. "This is equivalent to between approximately two and six additional monthly electricity bills, or an increase of over 15% in some years." That, to me, is an unacceptable cost for the people of the province of Ontario.

In addition to the cost that London Economics International identified, Ontarians are going to be hit with an 8% increase in electricity costs when the Dalton sales tax goes into effect.

The people of Ontario have been clear that they cannot afford to keep on paying all these extra costs.

I want to quote from an e-mail that I received along with many other e-mails regarding different parts of the bill. This one was particularly related to the cost. It says:

"Dear Mr. Hardeman:

"I am alarmed by the content of Bill 150, the Green Energy Act. If this flawed piece of legislation passes it will drive up the cost of electricity and destroy the economy of this province."

It was sent by a constituent in Tillsonburg.

There are many more people who have written in about the costs and who are concerned about what impact this will have on their cost of living and their ability to pay the bills, particularly as the economy is the way it is and money is becoming hard to find.

Beyond the costs, we've received a lot of comments about the health issues, and stray voltage is the one that I want to talk a little bit about. During second reading of this bill, I did speak somewhat of the stray voltage. I talked about the negative impact of stray voltage and said that it was one of the health issues that needed to be publicly addressed before this bill was passed. Many of the rural members have heard stories about the impacts of stray voltage on livestock over the years. We've had the government take some action: Hydro One must clean up the stray voltage when it's reported over a certain period of time. It was all derived from a bill introduced by the member from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex in the previous Parliament. She talked about the stray voltage problems and so forth. That bill was passed by this Legislature but was never called back for third reading. After I finished my presentation during second reading debate, the member spoke to it in questions or comments. She said, "I think the member from Oxford should understand that wind turbines do not create stray voltage." I'm very pleased to once again, today, have the opportunity to raise this issue and to correct the record.

One of the Green Energy Act Alliance documents says: "Stray voltage mainly occurs with improper grounding or a change in current patterns." I don't know about the wind in the Liberal ridings, but in my riding, it's somewhat unpredictable and inconsistent, so I can assure you that there will be considerable change in the velocity of the wind, and so a risk of stray voltage being derived from the turbines.

In fact, stray current is an issue for wind turbine manufacturers, such as the ability to minimize—and this is in an advertisement for a turbine—to minimize damage from stray voltage to the rotors and bearings on a wind turbine. They're talking about their product being better, because they can better deal with stray voltage. They're not eliminating it; they're just dealing better with it. The Liberty turbine even uses the reduction of stray voltage as part of their promotional campaign.

In order to address some of the negative e-mails that they have received, the minister has committed to have the Ontario Energy Board manage and address issues relating to stray voltage.

One member of the government side says there's no stray voltage coming from the turbine, and now we have the minister saying that they're going to have the energy

board look at it. When you know that there's a health risk, it doesn't make any sense to say, "We're going to charge ahead with creating the problem. But don't worry, folks, we have someone in charge of managing the problem when it happens."

I'm not going to pretend to be an engineer, but it seems to me that if you know there are concerns with stray voltage, they should be addressed publicly before the bill is passed, not later and behind closed doors, after there is a problem.

I received a letter from one of my constituents who is in the process of being involved with the public hearings on the creation of a wind farm in my riding. He writes, "Stray voltage"—one of his concerns is stray voltage—"in regard to wind turbines, not only from the transmission of the inverted power (Kinetics report)"—this is a report that deals with this—"but also stray voltage from the actual generator going into the ground. I brought some documentation from a manufacturer in regard to this.

"I explained to you my concerns about stray voltage coming through the ground to our home and barn, and how the Ontario Energy Board's stray voltage investigation procedure will only investigate stray voltage from transmission lines. The report that Van Bommel referred to"—which is the one that was mentioned in the House earlier—"does not deal with stray voltage from wind turbine generator that is of synchronous design.

"I also expressed my concerns that the report that Van Bommel referred to does not have a time frame for investigation of stray voltage ... and ... does not cover who is liable for any damages" from the stray voltage. Again, it points out that no one has done the work to deal with the stray voltage problem, and I think that's very, very important.

Now, there's an article that was in the Kincardine paper, the Kincardine Independent. It's a group of people who live close to the wind farm. It deals with the health issues that come from having wind turbines too close, and just deals with the setback distances. Again, in the bill, they're left open; the setback distances are not there yet. But it appears that for the ones that they're having the discussions on, the proposals would have the setbacks too short in order to deal with the recommendations from the manufacturers of the turbines that the setback distance would not be far enough to bring down the noise—and the stray voltage issues—to the level that's acceptable according to the MOE, and not have to go beyond the distance that the ministry is talking about for the setbacks. That was a major concern for my constituents.

Stray voltage is a health concern. These are issues that should be addressed publicly. I want to make this clear: I don't think it's good enough to put in the bill that the minister can, after the fact, set up regulations that would deal with all these problems. Who is he going to talk to? He said, "We're going to have broad consultations." The truth is that if you're going to have broad consultations, that should have been done as this legislation was being processed.

1630

Mr. John Yakabuski: He talks to the ones who already agree with him.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Yes, but even then he's never going to talk to anyone, even the ones who agree with him, when it comes to the regulations; he's going to go into his office, he's going to write the regulation that he thinks is the appropriate one, he's going to take that into cabinet, and the Lieutenant Governor is going to sign it. That's going to be the law of the land, and all the people who have been involved in the process thus far are no longer going to be heard from.

I think that's one of the main issues that the people I represent have concern over, that presently they are going through a process to see whether it's an appropriate activity adjacent to their community, and when this bill passes, that will be taken away from them. They will no longer be asked. They will just be told what's going to happen to them in their community.

That brings me to the point that I find very important, the part that takes a lot of that authority away. It's an addition to the amendments; it's the municipal authority. Presently, when a wind facility is being sited, one of the first things that the proponent must do is prepare reports to justify the rezoning of the land to allow the wind turbines to be there. Land use planning is a municipal function—at least it is for everything except the things that this bill applies to, because this bill takes away the municipal authority for land use planning as it relates to renewable energy. From now on, the proponent will not be putting forward their proposal to the local people in the local municipalities; they will prepare an application as they see fit, they will send it off to Toronto, and the minister and his staff, in their office, will decide whether they think this is a good project and whether there are enough lines to take the power away, and then they will build it. I'm not sure whether the act—I'd have to check it really close—would require that he notify the people that they were going to have this facility in their backyard before the building permit was issued or after the facility was built, and no one would be notified about that until after the fact. Even then, there's nothing they can do about it anyway.

There's one glitch in there. There may be something they can do because the minister, according to the bill, is not going to check the standards that are required until after the fact. As I said about my constituent having a concern about the setback, the challenge we face is that if the setback he puts in place is not enough to bring the sound at the end of the setback down to the level that the Ministry of the Environment says is an acceptable level of noise, then these facilities can't operate, unless one of the two changes their standard, and the only one that can change the standard at that point—you can't move the turbine after that, so they would just lower the standard of the Ministry of the Environment that says how much noise people have to put up with.

If we already have problems today with the health risks of the noise and the vibration from these facilities, I

find it hard to understand why the minister would put something in place that says, "We will build it, and then we will figure out whether it's appropriate to operate." I think that really needs to be addressed as we speak.

Another thing, and it has to do somewhat with the issue of land use planning, is the issue of farmland. At the beginning of the speech, I said I believed in protecting our environment. I believe that's very important, and so do our farmers. They depend on their land to earn a living and to provide for their families. They are careful stewards of the land and want it to be protected. I want to make that very clear: There's no one more concerned about protecting good farmland than farmers. One of the requests we heard during the committee hearings on this bill was to protect our highest-quality farmland to ensure the future of our agriculture industry.

In a recent commentary, the Ontario Federation of Agriculture said, "The OFA does not support solar farms that would take agricultural land out of food production." That's forward thinking. There is a lot of land right now, I suppose, where they could say, "Well, we would sooner put in solar farms, because obviously government is going to pay us a great return on that. Growing crops is not going to present nearly that much return." The Ontario Federation of Agriculture isn't looking at that. As they say, the future says that they don't make any more good agricultural land. We've got to protect that which we have.

If you're going to build solar farms, the sun will shine other places where you can't grow crops. Let's not put the solar farms on the best cropland we have. In their presentation to the standing committee, the association of municipalities—not just farmers—said that ground-mount solar projects should not be permitted on class 1, 2 or 3 agricultural lands.

We believe in the importance of the future of our agriculture industry. That's why the PC caucus tabled an amendment to Bill 150 that restricts or prevents the installation of solar farms on agricultural land in category 1, 2, 3 or 4. Before that amendment was voted on, I came into this Legislature and asked the members of the government party to demonstrate their commitment to Ontario's agriculture by supporting our amendment, but the government members still voted the other way. They voted it down, along with all the other amendments that my good friend Mr. Yakabuski introduced at the public hearing.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Every one.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Every one where suggestions were made to do a better job of what was being done, they voted it down. Again, this wasn't just because the farmers wanted it protected. This was the farmers who produce our food, the farmers who have a great interest in protecting agricultural land, and it was the municipalities who represent our rural communities—who represent all communities, for that matter; they represent our communities and the people who live in them to make sure that they are protected and that they have some involvement in where these facilities are sited.

I was at a conference where the Minister of Energy was asked about the issue of taking away the municipal planning authority, and I guess the minister has a different view of what municipalities do on our behalf. The minister said, "Yes, we are lifting that burden of making those decisions off your shoulders. We're going to make them on your behalf." I was a municipal politician for many years. I was involved with the association of municipalities. I was chair of the rural municipal association. And I can tell you that we didn't look at land use planning as a burden to municipalities; we saw that as an opportunity to help our communities grow in the proper way, in an environmentally sound way, in a sustainable way, and in a livable way for the people in our communities. So when the minister says, "We're going to take that away from you. We're going to lift that burden from your shoulders," we don't see that as a plus. I think that was a great sign that he not only did not understand everything in his bill, but he understood absolutely nothing about land use planning, particularly in rural Ontario. I have to say I was very disappointed in the minister's comment.

I do have, as my time is running close, a couple of things here from some of the people who wrote. They deal with the issues of the noise and the setbacks. I just want to read a couple of paragraphs into the record.

This is from a farmer. It's actually from the farmer's wife—Mr. And Mrs. Farmer, shall we say. "We are on noise study #3 now. There is still no resolution to the extreme vibration and humming we experience on many nights, not to mention the noise from what seems like the general working of the turbines, that has reached over the MOE guidelines. We are suffering severe sleep deprivation and mental stress, and my husband is also experiencing ringing in the ears, tinnitus, on a mostly regular basis now. Even our dog has been affected."

It's hard to believe that with comments like that, the government can say, "We're going to proceed, and we'll do some health studies sometime in the future. Maybe and maybe not we will let the turbines run." I don't think the people who are investing in building the turbines can build them under those conditions, but even more importantly, I don't believe government and the people living around them can accept that type of an approach, to say, "Build them and then we'll see if you can use them." That letter is a perfect example of that, that they haven't done their homework and they're going to do it after the fact. Until we're ready and able to tell people where they are going to be built, I think we should not have this bill complete third reading, at least until we can know that once they are built, they can be operated and provide the electricity that the minister says he wants them to provide.

So I don't think the government is ready for this bill to be passed, and I would advise that they vote it down as it comes to third reading so we can start again and actually prepare one that makes it safe for all Ontarians not only to benefit from green energy, but to live safely next to green energy.

Thank you very much for the opportunity to speak to this today.

1640

Mr. John O'Toole: I just wanted to get up and respectfully comment on the member from Oxford, who I think, as he outlined in his remarks about the work he has done in municipal affairs at a very high level—he's dead-on in terms of the overriding authority it gives the minister to locate these, what they call renewable energy projects.

The ambivalence coming from the Ontario Federation of Agriculture is quite surprising as well. There will be winners and losers in this, but they're only speaking to the winners: the people with biomass or biogas or wind or solar who may benefit from it. He addressed that in his remarks.

Also, it overrides the Municipal Act and the municipal Planning Act on conservation land. My riding—and the member from Oxford brings it up—is crossed completely, from one end to the other, with the greenbelt and the Oak Ridges moraine. I don't want to see these wind turbines like they are in California, all down the Simi Valley. This is unseemly. On top of that, I can't help but think that some of these turbines are actually a bit of a landscape eyesore.

I think this needs to be clarified, where they're going to override—the greenbelt legislation says that you can't so much as build a garage or a birdhouse on the greenbelt. Now, all of a sudden, they're going to override that and be able to put—these wind turbines aren't going to stand alone. There has to be a service road; there has to be a building with the tools in it to service it in the event that it fails; there's got to be a transformer involved; there's got to be a road built for maintenance vehicles getting to the site—all of this on pristine countryside like the Oak Ridges moraine.

I don't believe that what they're doing here makes good sense. The concerns he raised are valid, and the government should listen.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments? The member for Oxford, you have two minutes to respond.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I want to thank the member from Durham for his kind comments.

In my two minutes, I just want to read another paragraph into the record that I got from a constituent who has been very involved with this. We had a long talk in my office, and then he wrote me a letter with some of the items that we discussed. I think this one is very helpful, as I talked about the setback distance.

"We talked about the professional engineer Martin Ince who is doing the environmental assessment on the proposed Gunn's Hill wind project. I showed you the documentation which shows that at 527 metres, in his own project, the sound exceeded the 40-decibel limit set by the MOE. I informed you that in the proposed Gunn's Hill project, the developer Prowind has proposed a 500-metre setback. This distance was also proposed by Prowind (and recorded in the minutes) at the township of Norwich public meeting on August 12, 2008. I expressed

my concerns that if this government were to establish a 500-metre setback then it appeared obvious to me that they are driving these industrial machines into areas knowing full well that they would very likely be going to be violating the present MOE noise guidelines and causing harm to people. The Merlin wind farm documents that you were holding showed that at 800 metres, this project was just below the MOE guidelines."

I think this points out how important it is to have a clear definition and a clear regulation today, or have it in the bill, as to what the setback will be, to make sure that what we are building is not going to be inoperable because of the MOE guidelines for noise and other attributes that are coming from these wind turbines. So I hope that they take this into consideration and actually come up with a plan that protects our people before we build something—I think years ago they used to call it building white elephants—that can't be operated for the purpose for which it was designed.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mr. Ted Arnott: I want to express my appreciation to Pina Martino for giving me the opportunity this afternoon to speak to Bill 150. When she informed me that I still had another chance to speak to this, I was really excited and looking forward to that chance to speak to Bill 150. She does a great job helping us organize our speeches, and I just want to thank her again for that opportunity.

Given the fact that I only had 24 hours, though, to prepare—I wish I had had more time, but I have followed this debate with some considerable degree of interest, and I was also given the opportunity to be the first speaker for our party at second reading.

You will recall that this bill was introduced on February 23, and we commenced second reading debate the very next day. From this side of the House, we asked about the unseemly rush that seemed to exist on the part of the minister. We asked that the bill, because it was so significant and important, be referred to a standing committee immediately after first reading, consistent, I believe, with what the government had done with Bill 100 a few years ago, when Dwight Duncan was Minister of Energy, to allow for public hearings before the lines were drawn hard and fast. Certainly, that's something we wish had happened, but unfortunately the government proceeded the way they had initially planned.

As it turned out, there were some limited public hearings. We had some opportunity to participate in those. Our member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, who does a great job on our behalf as our party's energy critic, participated in those hearings and brought forward significant amendments, I understand, many of which the government voted down, unfortunately.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Every one.

Mr. Ted Arnott: Every single one.

Let's get back to this bill. We call it the power grab act; I think that's a more appropriate term. The Minister of Energy and Infrastructure, through Bill 150, is seeking significant new powers so that he can have his will with

respect to taking over the energy system of the province of Ontario.

I think it's important to point out a few facts that our caucus continues to bring forward. Fact number one is that costs for consumers will certainly increase. The government has made a statement with respect to cost increases that I think is grossly understated and intended to misinform the public about the true cost of this bill. The initial transmission investment of \$5 billion, paid by 4.2 million metered electricity consumers, is about \$1,200 per consumer, or 100% of their electricity bill. Spread over the years, that's a 30% increase, considerably higher than what the minister has said the hydro bills will go up.

More than 40% of the 50,000 jobs that the minister has talked about will be in construction of new transmission and distribution lines, and these are, of course, short-term temporary jobs that won't be long-lasting.

This bill intrudes into private real estate sales and creates draconian powers in the appliance business. We know that that's a significant concern in the province of Ontario right now.

This bill creates sweeping new directives and regulatory powers in the Ministry of Energy and Infrastructure—I alluded to that in my opening comments.

This bill adds yet another new bureaucracy to the energy mix, and this bill takes away rights from municipal governments, who are directly affected by projects.

I think it's also important to point out, despite what the Premier and the Minister of Energy and Infrastructure would have us believe, that this bill is absolutely no panacea to the economic crisis in Ontario. Certainly, that was the government's emphasis when the Premier started the debate on this bill. Initially, when he talked about it publicly, he said he had hit the sweet spot, using a tennis analogy, as if bringing in this bill would create 50,000 jobs. Certainly, we've shown that to be exaggerated.

Ontarians are going to end up paying the price for more expensive energy and for the pet conservation projects of the government—we know that to be true and a fact. The job numbers that the Premier and the minister cite are exaggerated in the extreme. The only jobs this bill is certain to create are more inspectors with sweeping powers to monitor energy efficiency.

We know that the competitive business in energy generation, which our government tried to create as a positive reform in the province of Ontario, is over as a result of Bill 150 and the anticipated passage of Bill 150. The bill gives sweeping power to the minister to direct power acquisition and transmission distribution expansion in Ontario, plus there is zero guarantee that this plan will attract sufficient new and replacement generation to meet our energy demands.

I would add an additional point: The fact is, the last time the Liberal government overhauled the energy system, they brought in Bill 100, as I said before. That plan didn't work, so they replaced it with Bill 150, an energy bill that's 50% higher than the last one.

Those are some of the concerns that our caucus has consistently brought forward with respect to this bill. I

know that members are aware that our caucus engaged a company called London Economics International LLC, which is a credible electricity-economics consulting firm, one of the best in the world. Their independent analysis shows that the Green Energy Act, Bill 150, may cost each household between \$247 and \$631, on average, per year between 2010, which is when it starts to be implemented, and 2025. This means that the cost increase could be as much as \$1,200 per household in 2025, which really isn't that far away, thinking in terms of this year being 2009. This is an equivalent to between approximately two and six additional monthly electricity bills or an increase of some 15% in some years.

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We also know that the estimated total cost of the Green Energy Act is the summation of five key elements: the cost of generation under the FIT, which stands for the feed-in tariff; the interconnection of feed-in tariff facilities; smart grid implementation; incremental conservation and demand management initiatives; and the establishment of the renewable energy facilitation office. Again, this report is something that I recommend to all members. I realize most government members perhaps haven't had the opportunity to read it, but it is available on the website of our party, I believe, if I'm not mistaken, or it is—

Mr. John Yakabuski: London Economics?

Mr. Ted Arnott: The London Economics report is available on the web and I would recommend it to everyone.

I would also want, in reference to this debate, to talk about the fact that my constituents in Wellington-Halton Hills are very concerned about the cost of hydro. They're also well informed about the need for security of supply. They know that if the lights are to come on when they flip the switch, there needs to be sufficient electricity capacity at the very moment to meet the demands of all the consumers in Ontario. They know that if the lights are to come on, there has to be a distribution network that has sufficient capacity to transport those electrons into their home.

I'm cognizant of the time that is winding down rapidly. I had hoped to speak longer about this subject. Certainly, I want to bring again to the attention of this House the fact that a significant number of my constituents in Wellington-Halton Hills are being dramatically and negatively impacted by the Bruce-to-Milton transmission reinforcement project. This is germane to the discussion on Bill 150 because part of the need for this reinforcement project, this new transmission line through my riding, is as a result of the implementation of Bill 150.

I just want to read very briefly what I received from one of my constituents—actually a couple, Pat and Steve Crouse from Halton Hills. It reads as follows: "Steve retired due to closure of Boeing Canada" a few years ago. "We secured private sale of property" in January of 2007; \$529,000. "We secured a lot in a 55-plus retirement community February 2007 and made selection of floor plan for construction." Then there was an announcement

in March of 2007 that the new hydro line would be constructed on the east side of the existing line. It says here, "Our requirement of disclosure for construction of line to buyers" was made. They basically had their house sold, but then the line was announced. The "purchaser issued a letter of withdrawal of purchase on the home due to line construction, unknown effect on health and future effect on property value for resale of home," so even though they had their house tentatively sold, the tentative purchaser walked away because of the uncertainty about the line.

Now they've been unable to sell their home. The price of the homes in our area has gone down, but this house has gone down dramatically, I believe almost 50%. They run a home business out of their residence as well, an accounting business, and their business has been affected by this.

Then Hydro One changed their plans to move the line to the west side instead of the east side. As it stands, the Crouses and a number of their neighbours, the Jenkins and Cindi Krauth and Rob Barlow, as well as Anne Clifford—there are a number of these neighbours who have been negatively affected. Again, I would call upon the Minister of Energy, as well as Hydro One, to be fair with all of the people who are affected by this proposal in terms of compensation. I would ask them to review the compensation plans

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Ms. Laurel C. Broten: I just want to take a brief moment to respond to comments made with respect to the London Economics institute report. I want to highlight that the London Economics institute report really ignores some \$900 million in investment that will be made in conservation strategies over the next three years that will help families use less electricity if the proposed Green Energy Act is passed.

They also did not take into account in their calculations that these investments, in addition to additional spending anticipated on conservation, will help the typical family reduce their energy consumption by 15% to 20% over the next 15 years. These are major absences of information contained in the London Economics report.

The Green Energy Act initiatives are projected to increase electricity bills by an estimated average of 1.3% per annum over the next 15 years. Everyone who watches and works in this sector will tell you that if we do nothing, fossil fuel costs will increase and bills will go up, but the Green Energy Act provides people with an opportunity to reduce their energy consumption, it rebuilds our grid, our transmission lines, and it helps us protect the planet at the same time.

The last point I want to make about the London Economics report is that the report pads their cost projections by adding, for example, \$48 million in costs for the Renewable Energy Facilitation Office. When I read information like that that has no basis in reality, I do question the premise or motives of the researchers in putting forward such a document, certainly at the request

of the party opposite. So I think we have to take the information in the London Economics study with a grain of salt, and I certainly do.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. John Yakabuski: I appreciate the comments of the member for Wellington–Halton Hills and the great work that he has done on this and so many other pieces of legislation.

I want to speak to the member for Etobicoke–Lakeshore as well and her comments, and how she stands here in this House and wants to discredit the London Economics International report. As I have said to the minister, to the parliamentary assistant, the member for Etobicoke–Lakeshore and the Premier, don't come in and say, "Piecemeal this" and, "This isn't exactly right" or, "That's not quite right"; produce a report. That report she's talking about, \$48 million for some kind of a management office there—and this report indicates that the cost of this act could be as high as \$46 billion. That would be 1,000 times as much. So stop talking about, "This is wrong," or that you don't think they did this right; produce the report.

This was a 67-page document that used data from the OPA, the IESO, the OEB and other forecasters and planners in the electricity sector. They didn't take these numbers out of the air. This government wants to take numbers out of the air or say, "This is wrong," but what evidence have they produced to say that anything they're saying is something that we should believe or trust? Produce a report. Don't expect people in the province of Ontario to just say, "Oh, George Smitherman and Dalton McGuinty have said it; therefore, it must be so." In fact, they've grown to distrust most of what those folks say because their record indicates that they're not good at keeping their word. So I would say, produce a report or forever hold your peace.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions or comments? The member for Wellington–Halton Hills, you have two minutes.

Mr. Ted Arnott: I want to thank you very much for this opportunity to speak to Bill 150, but I wish I had more time because I want to read more of the statements from my constituents who live along the Bruce-to-Milton transmission reinforcement. Once again, this project is a twinning of a big hydro tower line through my riding. I would again suggest to this House and hopefully to the ministry staff who might be monitoring this debate that there are a huge number of my constituents and others along the line who are not being treated fairly when it comes to compensation.

Again, I would briefly read from John and Julia Jenkins, who told me, "In March 2007 our property, after being advised by Hydro One we were a mandatory buyout and would be expropriated due to the twinning of power lines from Bruce to Milton, lost its tranquility.

"A year and a half later we were told expropriation would not be the case as the lines would be moved to the west side of the existing lines. This news, following the stress of waiting on the expropriation process, only to

learn the reassessed value of our property had decreased by \$231,000 (more than half of our purchase price) due to the effects of twinning of the towers and mild decline in the market, was devastating to my family. Hydro One has left us with a property that has been deemed 'condemned' by the real estate industry, leaving us in a position for over two (2) years unable to sell. We were co-operative with Hydro One through the whole process, expecting to be expropriated due to the 'mandatory buyout' we were told we were by Hydro One representative George McDonald. We expected the same treatment as the Vales, northeast of us on Highway 7, and that we would be in a position to relocate our young family within Halton Hills. This now 'condemned' property leaves us unable to sell and taking a tremendous loss on the one (1) asset we had hoped to leave our children one day. And although not substantiated with regards to the health effects of living next to power lines, we had no intention to raise our children next to two (2) high-powered lines, not knowing if there are possible health risks over long-term exposure.

"Simply put"—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Thank you. Further debate?

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Okay. I just wanted to check with the table, because I would have thought you maybe had debated on the third reading.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Oh, yes. On a point of order, Mr. Speaker?

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Point of order?

Mr. John Yakabuski: I just thought that it's barely 5 o'clock, and we wouldn't want to shut this place down until 6, so I thought maybe we could keep going.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): That's not a point of order. It is one person's opinion, but it's not a point of order.

Further debate? Does any other member wish to speak?

Mr. Smitherman has moved third reading of Bill 150. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it. Call in the members. This will be a 10-minute bell.

I have been provided with the appropriate documentation that would indicate that the recorded vote will take place at deferred votes on Thursday, May 14.

Third reading vote deferred.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I move adjournment of the House.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it. This House is adjourned until 9 of the clock on Thursday, May 14.

The House adjourned at 1702.

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Maria Van Bommel
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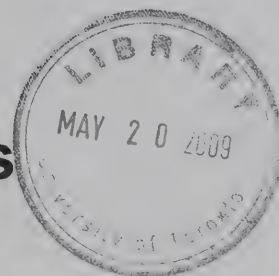
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Thursday 14 May 2009

Jeudi 14 mai 2009

Speaker
Honourable Steve Peters

Président
L'honorable Steve Peters

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Greffière
Deborah Deller

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 14 May 2009

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 14 mai 2009

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Good morning. Please remain standing for the Lord's Prayer, followed by the Hindu prayer.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

TOBACCO DAMAGES AND HEALTH CARE COSTS RECOVERY ACT, 2009

LOI DE 2009 SUR LE RECOUVREMENT DU MONTANT DES DOMMAGES ET DU COÛT DES SOINS DE SANTÉ IMPUTABLES AU TABAC

Mr. Bentley moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 155, An Act to permit the Province to recover damages and health care costs incurred because of tobacco related diseases and to make a complementary amendment to the Limitations Act, 2002 / *Projet de loi 155, Loi autorisant la province à recouvrer le montant des dommages et du coût des soins de santé engagés en raison des maladies liées au tabac et à apporter une modification complémentaire à la Loi de 2002 sur la prescription des actions.*

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Debate?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: I'm very pleased to rise on this occasion to lead third reading debate.

This bill will do several things, but it does them in a broader context. We all know the terrible effect of tobacco on the health of Ontarians. We all know about the damage that tobacco consumption can do and the death that it causes. There isn't one among us who doesn't know somebody who has been affected by tobacco-related disease, often in a very tragic way.

What this bill does is provide the ability for the people of Ontario to recover health care costs from tobacco companies where it is alleged that their actions have contributed to those costs. This is not new to North America. It was conducted quite successfully in the United States about a decade and a half ago—almost \$250 billion collected or being collected from tobacco companies. Litigation has been commenced throughout other jurisdictions—specifically, British Columbia and New Brunswick—to recover damages for health care costs from tobacco companies. What this bill speaks to is sim-

ply our ability to launch a lawsuit to recover damages in the same way.

The cost—the damages—of tobacco-related disease is enormous. About \$1.6 billion every year can be attributed to tobacco-related disease. Just to put that in context, it would completely fund eight large GTA hospitals, it would fund 211,000 hip and knee operations and it would fund 2,000 MRI units—not 2,000 MRI hours, but 2,000 MRI units operating eight hours a day. So there is a lot at issue here. What this bill does is provide the foundation for a lawsuit to be commenced. We need to do this before we can move forward.

The same approach has been taken in a number of other provinces. I mentioned British Columbia and New Brunswick—they've commenced lawsuits—but a number of others have already passed the legislation. This approach has been found to be constitutional by the Supreme Court of Canada. This approach is important, so that we can recover health care costs on behalf of the people of Ontario. In other jurisdictions, the allegations that are part of the lawsuits include allegations that tobacco companies in the past presented light cigarettes as being less harmful, when they were not; acted to suppress research into the harmful effects of tobacco use; and acted to target children with their advertising. Those are the allegations.

We haven't commenced a lawsuit, because we need the foundation on which to do it. This bill speaks to that foundation. It speaks to the ability of the people of the province to recover health care costs related to the alleged wrongdoing of tobacco companies that helped incur those costs through tobacco use. It speaks to the recovery on behalf of the people of the province of Ontario. It speaks ultimately to the terrible cost of a product that we all know has a very, very sad and terrible effect on the lives of so many people in the province of Ontario.

I encourage all members of this House to give very serious consideration to this legislation and very serious consideration to our ability to move forward, and I ask all members of the House to support this legislation as we continue the third reading debate, and to pass it, so we can recover in the same way they did in the United States, in the same way they're moving to do in British Columbia and New Brunswick, in the same way they've passed or proposed legislation in a number of other provinces in Canada. All we want, on behalf of the people of Ontario, is the same right that people in other jurisdictions in North America have already acquired.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Questions and comments?

Mr. Peter Kormos: I'm going to be speaking to third reading of this bill in short order. I'm confident the bill will pass this morning, in terms of having completed third reading, and then the government and the high-priced lawyers can go about doing what they intend to do.

I am going to be briefer than usual, in terms of a contribution to third reading debate, mostly because I've got a House leaders' meeting at 9:45. Ms. Smith, the government House leader, was very clever in that regard, and I give her credit—one should give credit where credit is due. She compelled me to agree to a 9:45 House leaders' meeting, and here I am; I'm going to find myself truncating what otherwise would have been 60 minutes of diatribe. But I do look forward, in short order, after hearing the Conservative response to this, to making my own comments on behalf of the New Democratic Party.

0910

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: I commend the minister for bringing this bill forward. I have some reservations, as the member from Thorold mentioned, about expensive, high-priced lawyers having their way with Ontario taxpayers' money, and the modest success ratio that has been experienced in other jurisdictions. Perhaps the minister could comment on that in his two-minute wrap-up.

I would also like to hear some comment, perhaps, on whether or not this legislation introduces retroactivity to the proceedings and whether that will be challenged in the Supreme Court, with the ever-continuing sound of the cash register going ka-ching, ka-ching, as it does with those types of cases. I'd be interested in the minister's comments in that area.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further questions and comments?

Attorney General, you have up to two minutes for your response.

Hon. Christopher Bentley: I thank the members from Halton and Welland for their comments. Let me address just a few of them.

Whatever challenges may come—and one can never tell what challenges will be made—the approach we're taking is the approach that British Columbia took, which the Supreme Court of Canada has had a good, thorough look at and has said is constitutional. That's why we are using this approach. It very much mirrors the approach that British Columbia and all other jurisdictions in Canada that have taken a look and are moving on this issue have taken.

I take the point about litigation and its expense. I think it's a very important point. We will be taking a look at the bill, if it passes, and determining our next steps, and we will be very careful with respect to the approach.

I would say, with respect to potential recovery, that one never knows in litigation. In the United States, where litigation is thriving regardless of the times and the circumstance, there was a very substantial recovery on behalf of the people of the United States—almost \$250

billion payable over 25 years. That was certainly considered by all the governments involved, and the interest groups, to be appropriate and well worth the instigation of litigation.

One can never determine in advance what is going to happen, but if we don't pass the bill, we don't even have the opportunity to advance. So I ask the members of the House to support this, so we can move forward on behalf of the people of the province.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Peter Kormos: We're witnessing a very sad pattern in this chamber. The Attorney General today, in very brief comments, takes credit for this bill, which is as much about public relations as it is anything else, when in fact it was the parliamentary assistant who did all the heavy lifting. It's the parliamentary assistant, Mr. Zimmer, who carried this bill through second reading and through committee, and does he get credit from the Attorney General? No. So where the Attorney General fails Mr. Zimmer, I will fill that vacuum and commend David Zimmer, from Willowdale, for his strong efforts in terms of stewarding this bill through the precarious legislative process.

You know, inevitably, parliamentary assistants are used to take the blame—take the heat—if something fails, whereas when something is successful, it's the minister himself or herself who seizes the spotlight, squeezing that parliamentary assistant out of the limelight, out of the press, out of any recognition.

Look, New Democrats regard this bill as largely cosmetic. Regretfully, we see the need for cosmetic efforts on the part of the government in no small way as a means of excusing itself for not being as successful as it should have been when it comes to creating declining smoking rates, especially among young people. People of our generation, Speaker, by and large have quit smoking. The carcinogens are already probably well implanted, and we haven't really saved ourselves, but by and large, people of our generation have quit smoking.

Sadly, young people continue to smoke and begin smoking at an alarming rate. Anecdotally, drive past the high school—and of course it's not on school grounds, but it's across the road, to the dismay and annoyance of people who have their homes across the road, where you see high school students, young women as well, frighteningly, smoking.

The other interesting part of that, of course, is—and I understand a package of cigarettes costs up around \$9, \$10 now. The interesting part is that the studies that have been done very cleverly, simply by picking up the butts and examining them, reveal that the vast majority of the cigarettes being smoked by those youngsters are the cheap, non-taxed cigarettes that come from native "smoke shacks," I believe is the phrase. And while we know that there are a number of legitimate manufacturers of those cigarettes, we're also told that there's a whole industry of counterfeit or bootleg tobacco cigarette manufacturing, using tobacco from who knows where—China, among

other places—raised under conditions where there's the use of chemicals, among other things, that would be prohibited in Ontario, increasing, augmenting, the health risks. As if it wasn't dangerous enough to smoke, these kids are also now probably smoking stuff that has any number of toxins and chemicals in it that are far removed from the tar and nicotine. It's not inappropriate to challenge this government on its failure to address that phenomenon: the proliferation of cheap cigarettes in non-native parts of the province, or communities that are not on reserves or are not part of reserves.

We know that the more expensive the product is, the greater the reduction of usage. That's why these cheap cigarettes are particularly dangerous and why the government should be regarding them as an acute health risk. Remarkably, I've sat in this chamber while the Minister of Health Promotion has been questioned about her response to this issue, and inevitably she refers the question to the Solicitor General, who then blames the feds, when in fact the enforcement of laws, as I understand it, is as much the responsibility of municipal police and regional police and Ontario Provincial Police as it is of the RCMP. So there's some explaining to do here, and we should be very concerned. This is a health issue, a major health issue.

Now, the government says it's going to start suing the tobacco companies. You can bet your boots, you can bet your bottom dollar, that the lawyers, the big Bay Street lawyers, the \$500-an-hour or \$600-an-hour lawyers, are rubbing their hands with glee. At the end of the day, they'll have made the money—and for all intents and purposes, who am I to criticize Bay Street lawyers, with their fancy, expensive cars—their BMWs and their Mercedes-Benz S series and their Maybachs—and their Prada shoes and their Rolexes and their Mont Blanc pens? Who am I to criticize them? Hopefully, they pay their share of income taxes. But at the end of the day, this isn't one of those John Grisham novels, where you've got some poor, sad family of a person who's smoked himself to a cancerous death who is awarded a multimillion-dollar settlement by a jury in litigation against the tobacco companies. The victims aren't going to see a penny, if indeed there's ever any money.

Now, as I understand the American litigation, huge chunks of it were resolved by negotiated settlements, and parts of those settlements weren't cash settlements, but they were agreements on the part of the tobacco industry to pull back on some of the advertising tactics and techniques they had used, pull back on their sponsorship of sporting events, pull back on their utilization of characters—I think Joe Cool was one of the characters.

0920

It's just remarkable that the tobacco industry exists at all in this province or in this country. We shouldn't be suing these guys; we should be sending them to jail. We should be providing Conrad Black with cellmates rather than simply looking for them to buy their way out of this intense level of culpability.

But of course this government, like so many others, is in a strange position, because at the same time that it

condemns tobacco use, it generates huge revenues from tobacco sales. Of course, the government now, cash-strapped as it is—after giving billions of dollars of tax breaks to banks and insurance companies, the corporations that least need it—finds itself looking for revenues from any source that it can, including plain folks like the folks who live in your riding and who live in my riding, with the new BST, the BS tax, the blended sales tax, an increase of 8% on everything from being born to dying: an increased 8% tax on funeral services.

This government will tax anything that moves, and if it doesn't move, it will kick it until it does and then tax it as well, yet the corporate world gets huge tax breaks, and we see a government that has simply thrown the towel in when it comes to contraband and cheap tobacco and cigarettes that are being smoked increasingly by youngsters.

The corner store issue: All of us received a package of materials from the corner store association, and they've been crying out for this government to do something about the contraband tobacco. The Korean Businessmen's Association—again, a large number of Korean-Canadian families are involved in the corner store, in the convenience store business—has been crying out for this government to do something about the contraband tobacco issue. These are hard-working people who have abided by the law, who have put all their tobacco products behind closed doors, eliminated any advertising or promotion of them in their stores and who rely upon tobacco sales, in no small part, to generate the traffic through their corner or convenience stores, and this government has done precious little for them.

So here it is: We're going to vote for the legislation. The Attorney General is quite right in that he has no idea what the outcome will be at the end of the day. As I say, we know that lawyers will be paid a whole lot of money during the course of events. There may be no return for the government of Ontario in terms of it seeking compensation for health care costs, or the return may be so small that the cost of getting it outweighs the actual judgment or settlement that's provided at the end of the day by the tobacco companies. New Democrats will be supporting this legislation when it goes to a vote later this morning.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Questions or comments?

Mrs. Julia Munro: I would like to comment on those remarks made by the member for Welland and the fact that it seems to me that this bill, as the minister himself has pointed out, replicates other pieces of legislation in other jurisdictions.

The issue is that we're in Ontario, and the problem is illegal tobacco. This bill does nothing to address that. It does nothing to address a growing and serious problem for people when we know that the number of smokers is in fact increasing, and it is through the avenue of illegal tobacco.

I commend him on his comments in that regard.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: It's always interesting to listen to the member. I'm sorry that his speech was short; I can't conceive of the member for Thorold actually doing something he didn't want to do because somebody called a meeting at the wrong time. However, I accept the member's protestations about where he can go.

The member did bring up interesting points, not the least of which was the illegal tobacco issue in which this government doesn't seem to be taking as much interest as the people of Ontario would hope. We have seen over the last couple of weeks the protests of the Tamil group, which is located outside the building here. We have seen them move on to the highways and the streets of Toronto, and they have been immediately removed. There's a lot of comment on the radio, there's a lot of comment in the newspapers about how this protest is inconveniencing their lives, how this protest is going on too long. It just strikes me as strange. I wonder how these people who are complaining about this short protest that has happened in Toronto would like to have lived in Caledonia for the last two years, where that same situation has been occurring on a daily basis, week in and week out. I just find it strange that the government can take the kinds of actions they have here in Toronto, absolutely ignore what's going on in Caledonia and absolutely ignore the illegal sale of cigarettes that is taking place on Ontario government-owned land that is being rented, and smoke shops that are being set up on that land. I just find there's a double-standard here that's disappointing.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Dave Levac: The member from Welland points out rightly that the parliamentary assistant, Mr. Zimmer, has done a great deal of work behind the scenes on this bill. It's nice of him to make sure that that gets mentioned.

I also am very concerned about the disingenuous comments that are being made about a different issue, as opposed to seeking this bill's approval to go after the people who sell those death sticks. If they want to try to relate it to that, I think it's disingenuous to assume that nothing's being done. The gentleman and the ladies who make those decisions are the RCMP, the OPP and the municipal police, and the work that's being done to disenfranchise those groups—it's disingenuous at best. The reality is that there's a very complicated issue here and there's an extremely difficult situation that's volatile. To inflame that simply by saying that the government is doing nothing is disingenuous at best. The reality we are talking about is to try to make sure that the companies that were selling these products—what has happened in the past, what has happened in other jurisdictions, happens in Ontario. Quite frankly, the health care costs that are involved in the recovery of that are what the minister is presenting, and I think rightfully so.

I've heard from the member from Welland, speaking on behalf of his party, that they are going to support the bill in a way that simply says that at least that party says it wants to make sure that those recovery costs are done.

With the comments that are being made by the members in the Tory party, I'm not sure if they are in favour of the bill, I'm not sure if they're against the bill, or if they just want to take cheap shots at the RCMP, the OPP and the municipal police. I just don't know what it is. Maybe they should stand right up and say so.

Thanks to the member from Welland for his comments.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further questions and comments?

Seeing none, the honourable member for Welland has up to two minutes for his response.

Mr. Peter Kormos: I know the member for Halton would dearly have loved to have had the two-minute response. I didn't hear him criticizing municipal police forces, the RCMP or the OPP. You know, I've been a critic of Julian Fantino, and I'm pleased to see now Ted Chudleigh, the member for Halton from the Conservative caucus, join the ranks of critics of Julian Fantino, because I have concerns. Well, I contrast Fantino with Bill Blair, for instance, who in Toronto has—in my view, the Toronto police have dealt remarkably with the Tamil Canadian community in the course of their protests and deserve a great deal of praise. I'm a fan of Bill Blair; I'm not a fan of Julian Fantino, and I see that neither is Mr. Chudleigh. I welcome the support and this new alliance that he and I have in our concerns about Julian Fantino. I know that when Commissioner Fantino reads this transcript, as he undoubtedly will, the fact that the member from Halton has now joined the ranks of his critics will cause him the concern that in fact it should.

0930

Look, let's make it clear: This legislation and this litigation is not going to reduce smoking. That's the sad part. It's not going to reduce that phenomenon of youngsters, teenagers, continuing to smoke and continuing to begin smoking, aided as they are by the proliferation of cheap contraband tobacco that seems to be uninterrupted in its flow, and that's of great concern. I think it's disingenuous for anybody to suggest that we shouldn't be concerned about that and that we shouldn't be crying out for action about that. All the settlements in the world aren't going to protect kids from ingesting carcinogenic stuff, to wit, tobacco, which they're doing every day. That's the sad part about this debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate? Seeing none, Mr. Bentley would you like time to respond, as mover of the motion?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: No, thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): We'll go to the vote, then.

Mr. Bentley has moved third reading of Bill 155. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I hear a no.

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those opposed, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it. The vote will take place during deferred votes, after question period.

Third reading vote deferred.

EDUCATION AMENDMENT ACT
(KEEPING OUR KIDS SAFE
AT SCHOOL), 2009

LOI DE 2009 MODIFIANT
LA LOI SUR L'ÉDUCATION
(SÉCURITÉ DE NOS ENFANTS
À L'ÉCOLE)

Ms. Wynne moved third reading of the following bill:
Bill 157, An Act to amend the Education Act / Projet
de loi 157, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'éducation.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Debate?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I am sharing my time with my parliamentary assistant, the member for Guelph. I just want to lead off by acknowledging the work of the member for Guelph. I know we're not to mention names, but Liz Sandals is my parliamentary assistant, and she has done terrific work in gathering information around the province on how we should move forward to make our schools safer places, so I'm very grateful to her.

The Keeping our Kids Safe at School Act is about just that: It's about making our schools even safer for students. Before I go into detail about what this legislation would do, I want to make an overarching statement about what I believe about the safety of schools.

When we have schools in the province where principals and other administration, support staff, teachers, parents, kids, all understand what the rules are; where they all feel engaged in the life of the school; where there are good connections with the community, including with the police, where those protocols and those procedures are well understood; where there is a code of behaviour that everyone understands; then we are in a far better place to expect that we will have safety in our schools.

Having said that, there's always more that we can do to make sure that those conditions are in fact in place. With that, we have to understand that schools don't exist in isolation from communities. What is going on in a neighbourhood, in a city, in a region, the services for public health and mental health and community and family support—all of those things have an impact on safety in the community and therefore in the school. I just want to be clear that we, in this government, do not take a simplistic approach or have a simplistic notion about what makes a school safe, which is why we have moved, for example, to put in place an equity and inclusive education strategy, because we believe that making sure everyone feels included in our schools is part of creating a safe school environment.

We have put millions of dollars and resources into anti-bullying programs in our schools, because we believe it's very important for everyone to understand what it means to bully, how to prevent bullying and how to react to bullying. It's the reason we have put more money into hiring social workers, psychologists and support workers, to make sure those people are available to the school system. It's why we introduced Bill 212, to make sure that the programs that need to be in place for students who are at risk, for students who have been sus-

pended or expelled—that these kids aren't just sent out to the mall but in fact have a program that can help them get back on track. All the things we've done have helped move us closer to the state where we have perfectly safe schools. Obviously, we're not there. We have to keep making incremental change.

This legislation, if it passes, would build on the work we have done over the past five or so years to make our schools safe. As I say, it has been a priority for us to make our schools safer; when we came to office in 2003, we began to do this work. For us, it is a non-negotiable that our students feel safe, that they feel comfortable and respected at school, and likewise that their families feel they have access to the supports they need. The reason that is so critical is that if a student doesn't feel safe at school, then it's much harder to focus on learning. Obviously, we have put a huge priority on student achievement and on kids succeeding, and in order for that to happen, they must feel safe. They have to be able to focus on learning.

Nous voulons que nos élèves obtiennent leur diplôme et qu'ils puissent exercer de brillantes carrières qui les comblent. Nos écoles doivent être des endroits où tout le monde—le personnel, les élèves, les parents et la communauté—se sent le bienvenu, en sécurité et respecté.

That's why I asked the safe schools action team, chaired by my colleague the member for Guelph, to investigate some of these behaviours that would create an unsafe environment: issues like gender-based violence, homophobia, sexual harassment, inappropriate sexual behaviour in our schools. As I've said before in the House, some of these are difficult issues to talk about, and that makes it even more critical that the safe schools action team went out and talked to people around the province about how to address these issues in our schools.

The safe schools action team also looked at barriers to reporting: What are the barriers that might be in place that would prevent a student from reporting, or that might prevent a staff person from reporting a serious incident? They talked to people about what might cause a person not to report, and we are acting on their advice as a result of those conversations.

They also participated in a review of local police and school board protocols. As I said, it's very important, as part of a safe school initiative, to make sure that schools have good working relationships with the community, including police services, and that it's clear what the rules are in those relationships.

I want to recognize the work of the safe schools action team, and the people who worked with the member for Guelph as part of that team: Stu Auty, Dr. Inez Elliston, Ray Hughes, Dr. Debra Pepler and Lynn Ziraldo. All those people have a variety of experience that they bring to the table, all of which was invaluable in making sure we got the right recommendations.

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I received the team's final report in December, and it is evidence of the thoughtful work all of those folks did—as I said, the difficult work, because these are

sometimes tricky issues to raise in the broader community, and critical to do so. There are a number of valuable recommendations that the team brought forward. We've moved quickly to act on those, and this bill, Bill 157, is one piece of that response. This particular bill would deal with some very important issues. First, it would address gaps in reporting in legislation. I said that we were looking at barriers to reporting.

At present, the Education Act indicates when a student suspension and expulsion must be considered by the principal, and these activities include bullying and assault. But principals cannot act on those behaviours if they don't know that they're happening. Staff members, if this legislation were passed, would be required to report to the principal any incident that they're aware of that could result in a student being suspended or expelled. First of all, we delineate what the behaviours are for which a student might be suspended or expelled, and then we require, under this legislation, if it's passed, that that reporting happen.

I just want to say that I know that these changes, if they are passed into law, will formalize what is currently happening most of the time. In the majority of cases, this is what already happens, but there was no formal articulation of that requirement, and we saw that as a problem. It's certainly something, I have to say, that we had heard from members of the opposition and from members of the public, and so we're hoping that it will receive the support of all the members in this House.

We also want to make sure that students feel comfortable disclosing incidents to staff, knowing that they'll be followed up on, and parents should feel comfortable knowing that these incidents will be responded to appropriately.

The legislation would also require principals to contact the parents of victims of student incidents for which suspension or expulsion must be considered. Right now, it's required that principals contact the parents of perpetrators of incidents, but there was nothing that codified the responsibility of principals to report to the parents of victims. Parents have a right to know when their child is a victim of such behaviour, and that is why we are putting this into the legislation. They can't advocate for their child and they can't work with the school to resolve these issues if they're unaware of the incidents happening in the first place.

However, we're also including in the legislation that a principal would not be required to inform the parents of victims if, in his or her opinion—in the opinion of the principal—it would put the victim at risk of harm from a parent. Again, that's a difficult reality to confront, but it's something that we know we need to have in the legislation. We need to make sure that principals have that autonomy to be able to make that decision.

The amendments being proposed would allow the principal to inform the parents of victims about the nature of the incident that resulted in harm to the student, the nature of harm to the student and the steps taken to protect the student's safety, including the nature of any

discipline in response to the incident. We think that's a reasonable response. Principals would also protect the privacy rights of other students involved in the incidents.

The safety and well-being of Ontario students comes first, obviously. If passed, Ontario would be the first province in Canada with legislation of this kind. We would be in the forefront in terms of this kind of safe schools legislation requiring school staff to report serious student incidents to the principals.

Finally, the legislation would authorize policies that would require staff who observe inappropriate or disrespectful behaviour among students to respond. Again, I understand that that happens most of the time, but it's something that we believed needed to be articulated. Such behaviours—we're talking about things like racist or sexist comments that are unacceptable in our schools. I think it's clear from much of the discourse that's going on right now, if we look at the newspapers, around issues of racism and how we perceive each other, that we do a very good job in Ontario to be inclusive, but there's still more that we can do. Having teachers step in and intervene when there are racist or sexist comments I think is something that we can expect. We, of course, would only require staff to do that if it's safe to do so. We're not suggesting that anyone should put themselves at risk but that they should ask a student to stop the behaviour, identify the type of behaviour and why it's inappropriate or disrespectful, and ask for a change in the future. Again, this happens most of the time.

Le projet de loi n'est qu'une partie de la solution. Nous prenons des mesures dans beaucoup d'autres domaines, en nous basant sur les recommandations de l'équipe d'action. Par exemple, nous apportons des modifications au curriculum, développons et maintenons des partenariats communautaires efficaces, améliorons la collecte de données et renforçons le leadership des élèves.

L'équipe d'action a formulé beaucoup d'autres recommandations très utiles dans des domaines comme la collaboration avec la police locale, la prévention et la formation.

We'll continue to provide a comprehensive response to the report. We are already acting on many of those other recommendations, whether it's the curriculum changes or the changes in terms of connections with the community. We have a responsibility to act on those recommendations, to continue to create the safest, most positive school climate that is possible. Now I'd like to turn my time over to the member for Guelph.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mrs. Liz Sandals: I'm delighted to have an opportunity to speak on third reading of the Keeping Our Kids Safe at School Act. I'd just like to begin by thanking the minister, who has been very supportive of the work of the safe schools action team. I know that the team has appreciated that as we've delivered the various reports. The minister has been very receptive and worked closely with us on implementing the recommendations.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I would have been disappointed if that were not true.

Mrs. Liz Sandals: It is true.

There are nearly two million students in our publicly funded schools, and each one of them deserves the opportunity to learn and grow. They will be our next generation of leaders and innovators. They will help our province grow and prosper. Every effort should be made to create a warm and welcoming learning environment for students. They deserve schoolyards where they run with friends, not run away from bullies. They deserve classrooms where they learn about different cultures, not to be silent when faced with inappropriate remarks. They deserve hope, not fear. We have a duty to take action, and I am confident that this legislation, if passed, will help make our schools safer.

As the minister said, many of the proposed legislative changes in this act were born out of the third report of the safe schools action team. I want to thank the team. We've worked together now—this is our third report. As I said, we've been very pleased, as we work our way through these reports, to see them implemented, and with each report I know we're making improvements in what's happening in our schools in terms of making them safer for the students. So I would very much like to thank the team for the work they've done over a period of several years now.

I've been proud to chair that team, and during our consultations we met with people across the province, including students, school staff, parents, police, community agencies and other members of the school community. We read the statistics. We found that when you looked at the statistics, half of the girls in grades 9 and 11 reported that they were on the receiving end of sexual harassment. When we looked at homophobic behaviours, we found that a third of the boys in our high schools reported being the target of some sort of homophobic harassment. We also heard stories from students about being bullied and from parents of victims who felt that they did not receive the information that they needed, hence the requirement in this bill to make sure that principals bring parents into the loop.

We compiled everything we learned and proposed solutions in our report submitted to the minister in December. I'm pleased to see that five months later we have the first step in the implementation of that third report: the legislation that we have before us this morning.

But I do want to point out that that's the first step. These are the pieces that require legislative action. As we move forward in the months to come, we'll be revising ministry policies, creating new policies and making curriculum revisions that address many of the other recommendations and flesh out the work that's in the legislation.

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What I do think we are seeing, though, is how committed this government is to making sure that our schools are safe for all of our students, because through this legislation we want to give every student a positive learning environment so they can reach their full potential. We want them to graduate confident in themselves and their

future. Everything we do should be focused on getting them there, because a high school graduation diploma is the most important thing that a student can do during their adolescent years. That's the beginning, the foundation, for the rest of their life.

As a government, we have set a target of 85% of students graduating from high school, and we have improved that graduation rate over the past five years from 68% to 77%—a clear signal that we are headed in the right direction. But the action team also heard that when students are bullied, they're less likely to attend school, more likely to drop out. We know that when students are the constant target of chronic homophobic harassment, again, they're less likely to attend school, more likely to drop out. So if we want our kids to graduate, bullying, sexual harassment and homophobia are issues that we must address to keep our kids engaged in learning and able to graduate. To get on the road to success, we must include greater school safety and a more inclusive learning environment.

We're taking several other steps to enhance safety and equity in our schools. We've launched a new equity and inclusive education strategy. We've provided funding to 33 schools in urban high-needs neighbourhoods to implement after-school activities, peer mentoring and other initiatives. We're also investing in programs like focus on youth and community use of schools to help establish our schools as community hubs for our youth.

During our safe school action team consultations, one student told us this: "In a safe, supportive environment you can be who you want to be without being afraid. You feel welcome so you want to be there and do more" at school. Another student told us that, "If staff observe negative behaviour, if staff don't call us when we make homophobic remarks or sexist remarks or racist remarks, then they are giving us permission to do those negative things." Those statements made an impact on the team. We feel that those remarks from kids captured exactly what we need to do and why we need to do it, and this proposed legislation will go a long way to creating the learning environment that is needed to help make sure that every student is safe and every student can succeed.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Questions and comments?

Mr. Peter Shurman: I have been somewhat involved in this process on Bill 157 through my work on the Standing Committee on Social Policy. I was disappointed, and want to say so, in the way this bill has come back to this House for third reading, inasmuch as while I agree with the minister and the parliamentary assistant to the minister that the idea is sound for mandatory reporting, it is important to say that mandatory reporting is, in the way it's applied in this bill, somewhat of a misnomer. It suggests to people who hear the term that mandatory reporting means there is some mandate to report and that that escalates to the ultimate authority, which, in my opinion, and I would have to say in the opinion of the majority of my caucus members, is the parent. We tried to introduce amendments to this bill that would have

taken the discretion, to some extent, away from the principal, where it is almost absolute, the way this bill has come back for third reading, and put it in the hands of the parents.

I have the experience, as have most people in the House, of having been a parent of young children—I brought up two kids who managed to make it to 30-something—and I can tell you that I would have been one angry person had I not heard of the various incidents—and there were incidents over the years—that involved my children.

In the course of hearings on this bill, I saw Liberal members of the social policy committee in tears, listening to closed-door testimony from parents whose children— young children, single-digit-aged children—had been violated sexually in the schools and were complaining to the committee that they had never heard about this until it was brought to their attention, in one case by the children themselves.

“Mandatory reporting” means more than what this bill purports it to mean, and I, for one, take exception to it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I will have one hour, at the appropriate time, to do a leadoff, and we’re not going to be able to do that this morning. I think things will wrap up very, very soon, so I’m not going to try to pack one hour into a short two minutes, except to say that there is a lot to respond to in terms of what I had said in the second reading debate and in terms of what I heard in the committee from the hearings. Some things the government responded to and some things they didn’t, and I’ll want to speak to that.

I want to speak to what the Conservative caucus has been raising for some time. I have some agreement with what they say, and I’m very supportive of some of the elements of what they have been talking about. We’ll have an opportunity to speak to some of the things that they have raised and some of the inadequacies of what the bill does not speak to in general. So when that opportunity comes, I will do my full hour.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you very much for giving me the opportunity to speak about this very important bill. I want to commend the minister and her parliamentary assistant for all the great work they have done in terms of this bill, and prior to this bill with the safe schools action team.

This issue has been very important to me from the time I was campaigning to be elected to this Legislature. A young mother asked me a question in one of the all-leadership-candidates debates about mandatory reporting, about kids being abused, primarily sexually, in schools and what the government was planning to do. At that time—I have to be very honest—I did not know the answer, and I was very frank with her. I said, “I do not know the answer to the question you’re posing, but I definitely will undertake to pursue this with you, if given

the opportunity to represent you.” Of course, I’m not naming her for specific purposes, to protect the identity of the child involved.

Since being elected, I’ve been working with my constituent and making sure that she had an opportunity to present her views to the safe schools action team and to the social policy committee as this bill was going forward. She has participated at every single step. I had the opportunity to converse with her the other day. She is very happy with the process that it has taken. She sees this bill as a good step in the right direction.

Of course, we need to do more, no doubt about it. We need to make sure that our schools are safe, that our schools are healthy, that our schools are a place where kids learn and where abuses of any sort—whether they be in terms of homophobia, racism or of a sexual nature—do not take place.

I commend the minister and her PA for taking the steps necessary to make sure that we make our schools more positive and more healthy. I’m very happy that I was able to represent my constituent in this regard.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further questions and comments?

Seeing none, the honourable member for Guelph, you have up to two minutes for your response.

Mrs. Liz Sandals: Thank you to the members for Thornhill, Trinity–Spadina and Ottawa Centre for their comments. Because a couple have mentioned reporting, I will talk about that.

The testimony to the safe schools action team, which included a written submission from the parent who my colleague from Ottawa Centre has referred to, and information about some of the other cases that we’ve heard about at social policy that more members had an opportunity to hear—clearly those cases were mishandled. They very much informed the recommendations that the safe schools action team made that are reflected in this legislation.

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Specifically with respect to reporting to parents, when a child is the victim of something that is on the suspension or expulsion list, the principal will be required to call parents. There is one exception to that, and that is when the principal has reason to believe that further involving the parent could do harm to the child. As somebody who was a long-serving trustee, I have run into these situations. They are rare, but they are real: for example, a student who has been subject to homophobic bullying who says to the principal, “Please don’t tell my parents, because my parents don’t know I’m gay. If you tell my parents I am gay, they will throw me out of the house.” Why would the member from Thornhill insist that in a situation like that, the parent must be informed?

We agree and we will put in regulation that the principal needs to do certain other things if they don’t inform the parent to make sure the student is supported, but we are not—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Thank you. Further debate?

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I ask for unanimous consent to stand down our lead.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Is it agreed that the Conservatives stand down the lead? Agreed.

Further debate?

Mrs. Julia Munro: I will just take a few minutes to offer a few comments on this particular bill.

I listened to the minister and the parliamentary assistant in their remarks this morning, and I recall that, as the minister herself mentioned, the function of this bill was to close the gap. I guess the question is, does it actually accomplish that? I think that there is, as the parliamentary assistant mentions, more to do, and I look at the kinds of materials and suggestions that have been offered by the action team and people like Lynn Zeraldo, and I think that there is a great deal more to do. At best, this papers over the cracks. It still leaves us with issues around the reality of bullying and the ineffective measures that have been put in place, but also there is a much greater recognition of the damage that is done to victims and the absence of supports for victims.

I look at, for instance, an article which appeared in the York region paper back in the fall when this was first being discussed, and it interviews Sergeant Sarah Riddell, who was commenting on the fact that that particular week, November 16 to 22, was being named Bullying Awareness Week. It just struck me that the fact that you have to have an awareness week says it all. She said that talking about the issue wouldn't hurt, especially since Internet bullying is becoming more common.

"As an example, statistics posted to the York police website show about 10% to 15% of children say they are regularly bullied, and close to 40% of victims say they have not talked to their parents about the problem."

So I think that even in the work that has been done through the legislative process of this bill, obviously, we've only just scratched the surface if you have as many as 10% to 15% of children reporting that, on a regular basis, they would be bullied.

Sergeant Riddell is quoted: "Children bully. Adults bully."

"It deals with not respecting people around you and not being fair to people around you."

"Police are seeing more cyber bullying where computers, instant messaging and text messaging are being employed, she said.

"Unlike in the past, where a student may have been bullied at school and then made it home to a safe haven, an explosion of technology in the hands of young people has made it possible to harass someone electronically when they are at home....

"It can be all that much more overwhelming," she went on to say.

When you don't have that direct contact with the victim, you don't necessarily realize the harm you are causing. To try and bring more awareness to the issue, York police have assigned officers to each school, elementary and secondary, in the region, which is where they obtain information about bullying. Officers also

receive calls from parents and older students who will call from home when the school day ends. I thought it was important to frame this discussion with that kind of reality that exists in our community.

I also think it's important to look at this issue of victims. Certainly there has been a great deal of attention in the public, in the media, on victims. Again, the York regional news was overwhelmed after the first article appeared on a particular victim. They covered several more articles as a result of the fact that the victim is often forgotten in the battle with the bully. I want to take a couple of quotes from the York regional news article on this:

"There's another lesson bullied children are learning,' says Jennifer Krizel, a Richmond Hill mom whose daughter was bullied in both public and separate schools.

"We've learned the bully's right to an education outweighs the victim's right to feel safe."

Further on: The "London Anti-Bullying Coalition noticed the same thing and is lobbying to fix the problem. 'The forgotten victim is the biggest travesty' of Ontario's new Bill 212, according to Coalition president Corina Morrison."

Certainly this Bill 157 was designed to rectify some of those things. But I think, from much of what research has demonstrated and much of what people have said in the public hearings that were held, this still becomes a very difficult process for victims. It is certainly, at best, an uneven way of looking at the way perpetrators and victims have been treated. When I look at some of the excellent programs that exist, I think the Minister of Education needs to talk to the Minister of Children and Youth Services and look at the ways in which specific programs are the background to prevention, which after all is really what it's all about. When you look at how much effort is being put into legislation and the mandate by the various boards of education, that's all work that is done, and costs and efforts being made, that come after the perpetration of bullying. I would suggest, then, that the Families and Schools Together program; mindyourmind.ca; and the SNAP program, Stop Now and Plan, are all programs that are issues around prevention. I think that while it's very important to be able to provide support for both perpetrators and victims, the government needs to be looking at prevention and looking at some of these well-documented, researched and extremely efficient programs that deal with prevention. At the end of the day, allowing this to take place at all is something that should be the uppermost concern.

I want to conclude my remarks with those that were provided by Karen Sebben. Karen appeared before committee with her son Daniel. She is a constituent of mine, and as far back as the beginning of the committee that the member from Guelph chaired, I offered to provide the opportunity for correspondence between my constituent and the parliamentary assistant. My constituent has been involved in this process right from early last year.

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She then appeared in the public hearings with her son, and I would like to read her conclusion to an article that

appeared in the York region newspaper chain on March 19; it says:

"Here, we can point to policy and see how aggressors of our schools are dealt with, but where do we point to help victims?"

"Mandatory reporting, although a positive" first "step, does not speak to the issue of dealing with victims within legislation.

"At the end of the day, our 'self-governing corporations,' known as our school boards, do very little to assist victims of bullying other than state 'Our hands are tied.'

"As taxpaying parents, we fund our schools and have the absolute right to demand accountability and justice.

"The failure of our government to stand up and take charge by ensuring the safety and learning opportunities of students who have fallen victim to violence is nothing short of neglect."

I think that captures it for the many people in this province who have, as parents, witnessed the kind of damage done to their children in this process. I think this tells us that we have a lot more to do.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Questions and comments?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I want to read briefly the amendment that was introduced by the Conservatives, which I supported, with some amendments that we made, because I think it tries to speak to some of the concerns that some parents raised.

What I was infuriated with and heard from three or four parents was the sexual violence that was done on young people—not by teachers but by other young people. So that was the story: violence by boys against boys, for the most part. The way that the principal did not deal with that in an adequate manner left me feeling very, very frustrated and angry. I thought those kids needed to be protected, and I thought we needed something in place to protect them.

The Tories introduced a motion that said:

"If the principal of a school believes that a pupil of the school has been harmed as a result of an activity described in subsection 306(1) or 310(1), the principal shall, as soon as reasonably possible," inform one or more of the following:

"(a) the superintendent

"(b) the chair of the board;

"(c) the director of education of the board;

"(d) the appropriate police department; and

"(e) if the activity is sexual in nature, the appropriate children's aid society."

I thought that was a good thing to do. Then it says "Safety plan," that the principal should have a "a written safety plan for the harmed pupil." I thought that was a reasonable thing. Third:

"Documentation by principal

"300.3.3 If the principal of a school believes that a pupil of the school has been harmed as a result of an activity described in subsection 306(1) or 310(1), the principal shall maintain written documentation,

"(a) describing the activity and the harm;

"(b) describing the actions taken in response to the activity and the harm; and

"(c) setting out the reasons for the actions taken in response to the activity and the harm."

I thought that was reasonable. We should have supported it, and the Liberal caucus did not.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Rick Johnson: I would like to thank the members from York Simcoe and from Trinity-Spadina for their comments, and I'd also like to thank the minister and the parliamentary assistant for bringing forward this bill. The goal of Bill 157 is clear in the title, which is the Keeping Our Kids Safe at School Act. We have an obligation, as a society, to create a safe and caring environment for all of our province's children, a place where they can learn in safety and have the desire to be in a safe environment.

As a former school trustee for the past 12 years, the majority of phone calls that I would get would be from parents who would be concerned about things that were happening in the schools. Many of the stories were heartbreaking. Just last week—my phone number is still on the local school calendar, so my wife received a phone call and passed it on to the school board, from a mother who was complaining about bullying in a primary school, which is a school that only goes up to grade 4. The stories are heartbreaking, when you hear that. I think we have an obligation as a government and a society to create that environment where children will feel safe. In the school board in my area, Trillium Lakelands, the board's logo is "Better together in a safe and caring environment." We really tried to live that while I was there.

We can no longer put up with the attitude that it's just kids being kids. Children need to want to go to school; they need to want to be in an environment where they feel safe, and that is really the key thing that this act is attempting to do. I would commend the efforts of the safe schools action team for the work that was done on this. I will be supporting this bill and I think that it's really crucial to the future of our province.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Peter Shurman: My colleague from York-Simcoe rightfully raised the issue of a perpetrator's rights sometimes being put ahead of a victim's rights. I again want to hearken back to a particular deputation made to the committee in reviewing this bill after second reading. Very particularly, this deputation was in camera by a very distraught mother of an 8-year-old—an 8-year-old, I have to say—who was sexually attacked by his peers in a washroom in the school that he attended, being literally scarred for life. This woman tearfully told the committee that what the principal had done with the reporting on this incident was to initially call the perpetrator's parents. It took a long time for her to find out what had happened to her child. That's why the amendment that we've been talking about, that was rejected out of hand by this self-satisfied Liberal government, that had to do with what a

principal does with information, made so much difference as far as we were concerned.

This is not an adversarial bill, from our party's perspective. This is a bill where co-operation between all of the parties could have and should have been invoked at the committee stage so that by the time we got to this third reading debate, we would be able to talk about mandatory reporting on the level that I think most Ontarians expect us to talk about it, which is that it is mandatory for a principal to escalate reporting to the appropriate authority where deemed necessary. To distort my words and suggest that we're talking about something like a gay student having that information preserved at the level of the principal and not shared with the parents—to me, that is not a discretionary aspect of a principal's rights. Principals have a duty of care to people which goes beyond the student.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further questions or comments? Seeing none, the honourable member for York-Simcoe, you have up to two minutes for your response.

Mrs. Julia Munro: I'm pleased to respond to the members from Trinity-Spadina, Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock and Thornhill. I'm very pleased that the member for Trinity-Spadina chose to use his time to put into Hansard the amendment that was proposed, because I think it demonstrates what the member from Thornhill just mentioned in the fact that it was not intended to be an adversarial or partisan kind of thing; we are concerned about the fact that there seems to be a need to provide a better system of reporting and, as I mentioned in my remarks, a better system of support for both perpetrator and victim. Certainly, I appreciate the fact that people took the time to respond to my remarks.

Third reading debate deemed adjourned.

Mr. Jim Wilson: It being past 10:15, this House stands in recess until 10:30, at which time we will have question period.

The House recessed from 1019 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Parkdale-High Park.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for being a gracious host today to Girls Government from Parkdale public school and also from Fern public school. These are their names: Julianne Rufin, Ann Truong, Alana Tinney, Thenuka Thanabalasingam, Mumtahia Monzoor, Monica Truong, and their vice-principal, Ann Marie Borthwick. Also, from Fern: the vice-principal, Linda Tasevski; and the girls, Mayla Patchett, Sophie Lovink, Astrid Burgess, Nuala Polo, Na'ama McLaughlin and Emma Lewis. One of them will be Premier one day.

Hon. Michael Bryant: I want to introduce my fabulous kids, Sadie and Louis Bryant. You all better hope that one of them isn't Premier one day. Welcome.

Mrs. Julia Munro: I'd like to introduce the students from W.J. Watson school in Keswick, who are on their way.

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to introduce people from the Strathroy and Area Concerned Citizens. They are Sandra Edmondson, Joyce Jolliffe and Kathryn Gordyn. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Robert Bailey: It gives me great pleasure to introduce the parents of page Cameron Tomlinson: his mother, Christine Tomlinson, his father, Scott, and his sister, Madison, who are with us in the gallery today.

Mr. Paul Miller: I rise on a request for the consent of this House. I request permission to wear this hockey jersey today, supporting the bid for an NHL team for Hamilton. I've heard the Premier's voice in support for this team, and I'm sure that my colleagues in the opposition will support this economic boost to the Hamilton region.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member seeks unanimous consent to wear the shirt? Agreed? Agreed.

And on behalf of the member from Bramalea-Gore-Malton and page Zachary Crichton, we want to welcome this mother, Theresa Crichton, to the Legislature today. Welcome.

LEGISLATIVE PAGES

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd like to take this opportunity to ask all members to join me in recognition and saying thank you to the pages for their service to all members of the Legislature. We wish you all the best in your future endeavours.

ORAL QUESTIONS

TAXATION

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: My question is to the Deputy Premier. For the past number of weeks, the folks across the way in the Liberal ranks have been in damage-control mode, trying to work the media and reduce the impact of their record-breaking, debt-ridden budget. The Progressive Conservative caucus has asked repeated questions about specific impacts in increased costs to families on items and services they use every day, because that's what we're being asked by families and seniors every day.

Minister, when you're forcing people to pay more taxes and those people are asking specifically what those new taxes will include, do you not feel that you have an obligation to provide them with an answer?

Hon. George Smitherman: To the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The information is readily available. We are creating a single sales tax. The new things that are covered are those services and goods that are not covered by the provincial sales tax. It is subject to

a number of transitional rule changes on which we are working with the federal government now in terms of implementation. I should also point out that the tax package will provide enormous tax relief both to businesses and consumers. We look forward to continuing the dialogue as we move to this more competitive tax system which that member and his party in the past supported but for some reason now don't support.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: The reality is we have not received any answers to very specific questions. It's difficult for most Ontarians to believe that you're bringing in this massive tax hike in the worst economy the province has faced in 80 years, with hundreds of thousands of job losses in the same environment.

We've asked about the increased tax costs for everyday needs: no answer. We've asked about the increased costs for sports and recreation activities: no answer; silence from your backbenchers. We've asked about the increased tax costs for a young person purchasing a first home and the potential of 21,000 jobs lost in the construction and renovation industries: no answer; more silence from your backbenchers. We've asked about the increased tax costs on family vacations. What do we get? A laugh and a shrug from Dalton McGuinty.

Minister, do you have any intention of facing Ontarians, giving them the real facts, or are you content with this bankrupt approach of ignoring Ontarians and their concerns? Is that your approach?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The only thing that's bankrupt is the integrity of the opposition party. Let me say again: Those goods and services that are currently not taxed under the PST will be affected by the new single sales tax. That list is readily available to the member opposite. I should tell him that we've been meeting with the same groups, working on transition rules, and we have been working with the Canada Revenue Agency on the very same rules in terms of implementation.

This is the right approach. This is the proper approach. That's why groups as diverse as the Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters, the chamber of commerce, a number of consumer groups and the Daily Bread Food Bank have said that our tax policy represents a bold step forward for Ontario that will lower taxes for 93% of Ontarians.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: I don't think we can miss the irony of the member of a government that has broken so many solemn promises to the voters of this province in their five and a half years in office—I think it's an understatement to say that Dalton McGuinty has a problem keeping promises. The two largest tax grabs in the province's history are the most expensive examples.

Minister, what is it that makes the Premier and his backbench yes-men and -women so proud of a tax increase, providing a very one-sided view, nothing about what it will really cost seniors and hard-working families and the jobs that are on the line? If you're so proud of

this and the tax shift that's going to occur here, why won't you be upfront about the downsides of this new tax: the cost to seniors and hard-working families, the thousands of jobs on the line and the impact on the underground economy?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I think that why we're proud of it, in spite of the attempts by the opposition to paint it another way, is that this represents a tax cut for Ontarians. Ninety-three per cent of Ontarians will get a permanent tax cut. Average families with an income of \$80,000 will see a 10% cut. The first \$36,000 of every-one's income will be cut 17%. Ninety thousand more people will no longer pay personal tax. Seven hundred and twenty-five thousand additional lower-income Ontarians would benefit from the Ontario tax reduction. A single parent on social assistance with two children will save over \$1,200 under our plan. A single parent earning \$25,000 with one child will save over \$1,100 on our plan.

That member and his party used to support this. His federal colleagues do. This is the right and the bold move for Ontario to build jobs and build—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

1040

GREEN POWER GENERATION

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: Back to the Deputy Premier: Thanks to the mismanagement of Dalton McGuinty, Ontario families and seniors are about to become the victims of one of the largest tax hikes in Ontario's history. The Premier likes to say Ontarians are willing to pay more for things like gas and green energy, but unfortunately he doesn't tell them how much more he's going to force them to pay. He prefers to camouflage the impact and bamboozle taxpayers.

Deputy Premier, this long weekend, when families head out for a much-deserved holiday, they're going to be going to the gas pumps, taking their boats to the marina to gas up. Next summer, will your McGuinty sales tax cause an increase to already unstable gas prices, and if so, how much?

Hon. George Smitherman: I want to say to the honourable member that I resent somewhat that he's already taken this long weekend away from Ontarians and he's fast-forwarded to some scenario, which is to concoct something that's more than a year from now.

But on the issue of green energy, as the honourable member has raised the question, I do want to make a couple of points. Firstly, we've taken seriously the role model of the Conservative opposition critic, who himself stated a 40% reduction in electricity use through behavioural alteration in the home. Today in the province of Ontario, we have launched time-of-use pricing that will see one million Ontarians enjoy the advantage, for 60% of all of the hours in the week, to have reduced electricity costs.

We're trying to make the commodity of electricity one where people use it wisely and take advantage of all

opportunities to use less of it, and especially to use it in less expensive periods, an opportunity for savings for consumers in the province of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: To date, I would suggest the minister's been less than upfront about the impact on Energy Star appliances, energy audits, energy-efficient renovations and energy bills: They're all going to increase more than they have, thanks to this upcoming sales tax. We also know that energy bills are going to shoot up as much as \$1,200 per year as a result of this tax-and-grab, disguised as green energy.

The minister doesn't have, apparently, the fortitude to say that, but London Economics has indicated as much. The Premier has refused to bring forward this kind of important information for Ontarians despite the fact that we're going to be voting on the legislation later today—the information that our critic has asked for on numerous occasions.

Minister, if what you say is in fact accurate, that people are prepared to pay more for this, do you not feel any obligation, any responsibility to disclose just how much you're going to make them pay?

Hon. George Smitherman: I think that if the honourable member and his party, in commissioning a purpose-built study, had decided to pay a little more for it, the company might have actually looked to give some credit to the consumers in the province of Ontario for the opportunities that the Green Energy Act represents to actually lower the amount of electricity they use. The Conservative critic Mr. Yakubuski, on the day that the bill was introduced, to great credit—and I've invited him to come to talk to school groups in my riding—mentioned that in his own household, they've reduced their use by 40%. He's the poster child for electricity conservation in the province.

Our projections are that a 15% to 20% reduction in electricity use is possible on the part of the people in the province of Ontario. We want to give them the tools that allow them to transition their homes and their businesses, institutions like this one, to lower electricity use overall. This is the way to protect consumers against the risk of rising prices: to use less electricity—and that's what the Green Energy Act helps to create.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: Mr. Yakubuski is not only the poster boy for green energy, he's also the poster boy for honesty and integrity, and giving the people of this province the honest and true facts about the real impacts of what you're doing here.

Yasir Naqvi, who's the MPP for Ottawa Centre—and I'm quoting a story related to him in the Ottawa Citizen where they said he is "misleading" in respect to the harmonized sales tax. Minister, no matter how—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'm going to ask the honourable member to withdraw that comment, notwithstanding it was a quote, please.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: I withdraw, Speaker.

Minister, no matter how hard your members try to push this sales tax policy, they can't get around the fact that they really are withholding the real, true facts related to this or ignoring them. You can't fool all of the people all of the time. We've heard that often enough. Why do you and your caucus take pride in refusing to give—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Deputy?

Hon. George Smitherman: It's fantastic that the honourable member has made such laudatory statements about his colleague. We would agree. We think that 40% reductions in a person's energy conservation is a story that should be told and we're grateful that the critic has been telling that. Here's a quote he had from the Green Energy Act third reading leadoff: "Let me begin by making it very clear that we in the Progressive Conservative Party on this side of the House are very much in favour of, and in the greatest possible way promote, the improvement, the enhancement, the growth and the necessity of green energy in the province of Ontario." So we're glad to see that support.

But there's another piece to it too, which is creating a culture of conservation. Our introduction today of time-of-use pricing will give people the tools that they need to transition electricity use to times of the day when it's actually cheaper than what people are paying now. This is a good opportunity, and we're delighted that the Leader of the Opposition and his critic are such strong supporters of this element of the legislation.

AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Acting Premier. Right about now the last pickup truck is rolling off the assembly line at GM's Oshawa truck plant. It marks not only the end of an era but also the end of GM's long run as Canada's largest automaker. This government played a role in the sad demise we are seeing today. It doled out \$235 million to GM without securing the production of the Sierra Hybrid pickup truck, notwithstanding the fact that the engineering work was actually done in Oshawa.

Having already betrayed GM workers once by not securing the Sierra Hybrid pickup truck for Oshawa, will this government continue to betray them by failing to negotiate job guarantees for GM's current multi-billion dollar aid package?

Hon. George Smitherman: To the Minister of Economic Development.

Hon. Michael Bryant: The reality is that the Premier of Ontario has played more of a role in supporting the auto industry in Ontario than any other politician has ever played in the history of Ontario, period—none of which is to suggest that this is not a really brutally tough time, obviously, for those people who are being affected by the wicked drop in demand that has taken place globally when it comes to auto and truck sales.

This government is endeavouring to do everything it can to support this auto manufacturing industry consist-

ently throughout the tenure of the McGuinty government, and from the moment that the industry was in the critical insolvency trouble that it is in now, it was Dalton McGuinty who stood up and said, "We'll be there for the auto industry as long as we take care of the"—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Today's plant closing means the elimination of 2,600 jobs. Another 1,500 will disappear next year, when GM's Windsor transmission plant closes. That will bring the company's Ontario workforce well below 16,000.

This minister should know that the original agreement with GM called for the company to repay \$235 million if its Ontario workforce fell below 16,000. What is this government going to go do to make sure GM lives up to its job and production commitments?

Hon. Michael Bryant: The member can't stand up and say on the one hand that the government has to do everything it can to support the industry, and then on the other hand say, "Let's stick it to the company as best we can." We're going to work with the company. We have to work with the company in order to see a future that is a profitable future. That's what we are going to do. If the member is suggesting—I don't know, I'd like to hear what the member is suggesting. We are going to make sure that the taxpayers in fact receive the best deal that they can, as they have over the past.

This government has made the investments necessary, and will continue to make the investments necessary, in the taxpayers' interest to grow the economy, and in the case of the auto industry, to support an industry like no other government is doing right now in North America—the only subnational jurisdiction in the world which is making these investments, and our support for that industry is unequivocal and will continue to be so.

I'd like to hear the leader of the third party stand up and—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Final supplementary.

1050

Ms. Andrea Horwath: New Democrats have supported, and always will support, the financial assistance for Ontario's auto sector. But unlike this government, we believe that it must come with ironclad job and product guarantees. The \$235 million given to GM in 2005 didn't include ironclad job guarantees, and we are now seeing the end result of that. Even the new GM-Suzuki operation in Ingersoll is producing only one SUV a month, if the media reports are to be believed.

With so much more at stake right now, has this government actually learned from its mistakes, or will it condemn Ontario's auto sector to further job losses and little return for the investment we're making?

Hon. Michael Bryant: It is absolutely the case that the government's investment on behalf of the taxpayers has to be in the interest of the taxpayers, but it also has to be the right deal. There's no question about it, and I don't disagree with the member.

It is also the case that the government needs to find a way, as best as possible, to provide support to the industry. If in fact it is the case that General Motors is not in a position to provide the kind of production that the governments of Ontario and Canada insist upon, then, yes, you're absolutely right, we will act in the taxpayers' interest.

However, we are more confident, on this side of the House, that we are going to be able to act in the taxpayers' interest and ensure that there is, as best as possible, the appropriate level of production here in Ontario so that General Motors and its workers and suppliers, and all of those communities that are affected, which is all of Ontario, have that bright and prosperous future.

EXECUTIVE COMPENSATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is to the Minister of Finance. Yesterday, the Premier made crystal clear his opposition to my bill calling for a cap on executive compensation. This morning, we may be finding out why he was so opposed. It may have something to do with the company he keeps.

My question is simple: Has the government sought advice on the issue of capping executive compensation, and if so, from whom?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The one thing that our government is intent on doing is protecting the footprint of the auto industry in Ontario. The member opposite wants to pretend that there's an easy way out of this. The member opposite wants to pretend that there haven't been more jobs lost in Michigan, Indiana and Indianapolis.

In terms of executive compensation, a number of parts of the arrangements in the Chrysler situation—and the General Motors deal, if we're able to come to one—will address those kinds of questions as well.

But let's all understand the enormous difficulty that this major employer and major contributor to our GDP is going through. Let's all resolve to work together to get a deal with GM, to protect the jobs and pensions of the workers here in Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, this morning's *Globe and Mail* paints a picture of how this government comes up with its economic policy. It would appear that the person really calling the shots at the finance ministry doesn't even sit in this House. No, he works at TD Bank, and he reports directly to a CEO who raked in more than \$22 million in pay over the last two years.

Why is this government putting the interests of corporate executives ahead of the interests of everyone else?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: We have a group of 12 economists who regularly provide advice to the government, including Jim Stanford from the CAW, who has provided a lot of very good advice to me individually, and with whom I communicate regularly.

Unlike New Democrats, I don't have all the answers. We reach for advice from all kinds of people, from CAW economists to bank economists, from the director of the

food bank to the directors of some of our largest companies.

To the member opposite, I'll continue to seek their advice, and I will continue to seek the advice—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: We shouldn't be surprised by any of this. Executives responsible for the poor decisions that have left large companies on the brink will continue to be handsomely compensated through the public purse while hard-working Ontarians are left to worry about the everyday essentials, worry about disappearing pensions, worry about getting slapped with an 8% tax increase that's going to cost them more every single day, all because well-heeled executives say so.

What will it take before this government finally says no to self-serving corporate executives and yes to the other 99% of Ontarians?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: That is sad. Let me say this: I don't believe Don Drummond is self-serving. I think Don Drummond provides good advice, some of which we take and some of which we don't.

We offered that member a full briefing from our ministry on the state of the economy prior to the budget, and she said no. She refused to take it. To the leader of the third party, I will continue to take advice from Mr. Drummond. By the way, the Canadian banks are not losing money; in fact, they're a symbol of success at a time when world banks are collapsing.

I ask our members in Toronto—more than 300,000 new jobs have been created in financial services in the last five years. No, no, to the leader of the NDP—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

TAXATION

Mr. Ted Arnott: My question is for the Minister of Tourism. With the price of a holiday set to go up 8% next year because of the Dalton sales tax, when will this minister start speaking up for Ontario families, travellers and visitors to the province of Ontario?

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I appreciate the question. Certainly, I've been working closely with our partners in tourism across the province. We've been out talking to them about our new regional structure that we're proposing. We've been talking to them about the new marketing fees that will be flowing to them as a result of our single sales tax and will benefit the entire tourism industry, as we have far greater resources to market the different regions and all of the great attractions that we have across the province.

I'm looking forward to the feedback that's coming back to us. We've had a number of consultations. We were in Gravenhurst just two days ago. We were in Sudbury, Thunder Bay, Kenora and Fort Frances. We've been across the province. We'll continue to work with our stakeholders to ensure that their views are reflected in the development of the regions and in the way that our regional marketing organizations will function.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary.

Mr. Ted Arnott: The Victoria Day holiday weekend, the traditional beginning of the summer tourism season in Ontario, is upon us. I'm hearing that the Dalton sales tax will grab over \$100 million from the pockets of tourists, making it harder for us to demonstrate good value which, traditionally, has been one of our marketing strengths. The \$40 million the minister referred to that she's promising the industry is actually less than they're now collecting in destination marketing fees.

What a message to send our tourists next year: Welcome to Ontario, where you get to pay a brand new 8% tax on accommodation, attractions, spas and the price of gas. The campground association tells us that the new 8% sales tax will hit campsites, guest fees, boat rentals, dock slips, boat launch, boat storage, heating and air conditioning—the list goes on and on.

Again, I ask the minister, why is she sitting back as her Minister of Finance prepares to pillage the potential of tourism in the province of Ontario?

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I'm certainly not sitting back. I've been meeting with my partners in tourism across the province. My representatives have been out in the field. We've had a variety of meetings across the province, talking to them about the regions, about the new funding that's coming their way and how that's going to benefit them. We are committed to working with the industry to ensure that we are providing the best marketing possible.

The new single sales tax, should the budget pass, will also of course increase the savings to our businesses by \$500 million, in paperwork costs. We are also cutting taxes for small businesses. As you know as my critic, small businesses are the backbone of the tourism industry. We are helping them create jobs, and we're helping them to grow even stronger. The corporate income tax rate for small businesses will be cut by 18%. This is a real benefit to tourist operators across the province.

I look forward to hearing more from them. We are being very proactive, working with our partners, to ensure that our tourism industry is the strongest it can possibly—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

1100

PENSION PLANS

Mr. Paul Miller: My question is to the Minister of Finance. Men and women in Ontario who have worked for decades for profitable companies are facing the prospect of living out their retirement in poverty because the government is walking away from its commitment to backstop pension shortfalls through its pension benefits guarantee fund.

This morning, the NDP proposed an amendment to the budget bill that would have ensured continued government protection of pension funds through repayable loans to the fund when claims exceed assets. Why did the McGuinty government vote against this amendment?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: What was particularly unfortunate happened in 1992, when the NDP exempted companies from contributing into the pension benefits guarantee fund. That was really unfortunate.

There's no doubt that a number of pension funds are in difficulty, the largest of which is the General Motors pension fund. Our government is working with the government of the United States, with the government of Canada, with the CAW, with General Motors of Canada Ltd. and with the UAW to try and resolve and keep General Motors viable and keep a footprint of that industry in Ontario. That is the best way we can protect those pensions and those workers.

But don't underestimate the problems that arose out of that party's blindness to the importance of paying for these kinds of pensions, and why they let General Motors out of that—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Paul Miller: Well, there have been three governments since then.

Yesterday, the finance minister shared his strategy for dealing with his own retirement savings plan. He said, "I just don't look."

Most men and women in Ontario don't have the luxury of turning a blind eye to their financial future. Workers at General Motors, Chrysler, Nortel and AbitibiBowater have given decades of their lives to their work, and now their pensions are at risk, through no fault of their own.

When will the minister get his head out of the sand and assure Ontario workers that the government will stand up for them by committing to provide bridge financing when claims exceed assets in the pension benefits guarantee fund in Ontario, and do it now?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The member opposite proposes to exempt these companies or their successors from paying their obligations, and asks the taxpayers to fill in the gap. We don't think that's adequate. We don't think that anybody should walk away from this. Frankly, the member opposite doesn't understand the depth of the problem.

They joke about it, and he makes a joke about what I talked about yesterday in terms of pension adequacy and in terms of our call for a national review of pension adequacy, because the reality is tens of thousands, millions, of Ontarians don't have a pension.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Order.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: They laugh and they joke, but I think the people—

Interjections.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: It's incredible that they make fun of Ontarians who are worried about their futures.

SCHOOL BOARDS

Mr. Rick Johnson: My question is for the Minister of Education. As a former president of the Ontario Public School Boards' Association and chair of the Trillium

Lakelands District School Board, I'm very interested in the recently introduced legislation that aims to modernize school board governance.

I've long been intrigued by the current legislation in the Ed. Act that outlines a long list of responsibilities—everything from putting up fences to buying milk. However, the most important goal of Ontario parents and educators, student achievement, is never mentioned. I'm therefore pleased that this legislation, if passed, would clarify the mandate of school boards to emphasize their responsibility for student achievement.

I also understand that the governance bill will require individual trustees to support decisions reached by their boards. Some of my constituents wonder if this will stifle the voices of elected trustees. I'd like the minister to answer the concerns of my constituents.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I want to just acknowledge the work of the member for Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock, the work he did on governance as the chair of the Trillium Lakelands board and as the president of OPSBA. Thank you very much.

Nothing in the governance legislation would curtail the ability of individual trustees to speak about matters in an open fashion, to have opinions and to state those opinions clearly for their constituents and during meetings. The clause I think that folks are worrying about has language about supporting the implementation of decisions reached by the board, which is quite a different matter. Once a decision has been reached by the board, what we're saying is, individual trustees must honour and support the implementation of board decisions and not move to have a different set of rules in their ward that isn't consistent with what's going on across the board. So it's more about supporting the implementation of a decision that's been made by the board than about having an opinion and expressing that opinion.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Rick Johnson: I know that this government has a history of working with school boards to support achievement across the province. During visits to schools in my riding of Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock, I've seen the progress that can be achieved when there is a culture of respect between all partners in our publicly funded education system: smaller class sizes, more educators, higher test scores.

In light of this, I know there are concerns in some quarters about other aspects of this legislation, specifically, the requirement that directors advise their board if it is or is planning to conduct itself or reach decisions which are contrary to provincial legislation, and that in the event that the board decides to proceed in contravention, the director will be obligated to report this to the minister. Although I don't share their concerns, I know that some might say that this might erode the powers of boards and put directors in a vulnerable situation. I'm interested to know how the minister would address these concerns.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: In fact, directors have always been expected to advise their boards when their actions are noncompliant with provincial legislation. That

has always been the case. What we're doing in the legislation is just being clear about some confusion that there has been on this point. Boards will only be required to act in compliance with provincial directives that are backed up by legislation, and that makes eminent sense. As the member alluded, this isn't new. There's still considerable scope for boards to make local decisions based on local needs.

In terms of directors, this provision makes it clearer as to what they should do in these situations when it appears that a board is not going to act in compliance with legislation. Directors who draw noncompliant actions to the attention of the ministry through me, the minister, will in fact be backed up by legislation. So in fact, it's a protection that makes it clear exactly what they are expected to do.

HOSPITAL SERVICES

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: My question is for the Minister of Energy and Infrastructure. A Toronto Star article printed yesterday describes how citizens of Milton are fed up with the lack of health care infrastructure that should have accompanied the economic and population growth. All fingers are pointing to the province, since it was this government that mandated Milton to grow in Places to Grow legislation from 2005.

A Ministry of Health spokesman is recorded as saying that the new proposed Oakville hospital will ease the strain on Milton District Hospital. However, there are a couple of problems with that statement: First and most obviously, the planned Oakville Trafalgar Memorial Hospital is nothing more than a field; construction remains delayed. Secondly, even when that hospital is finished, the relief in Milton will not be significant. Wait-time statistics in all surrounding hospitals are way above provincial averages. So the new hospital in Oakville will not only serve overflow from Milton but Mississauga, Burlington, Brampton and even Hamilton.

Milton needs an expanded hospital. Will you tell the people of Milton when they can expect an expanded hospital?

Hon. George Smitherman: I know the community of Milton. I can't confess to know it as the honourable member does; I believe he goes there somewhat more frequently than me. But I also know that the growth in Milton has not all occurred in the last week or two, as the minister's question does suggest. The growth there has been ongoing, and this is a pattern that has occurred in other places in Ontario as well.

We really were delighted in a recent visit to meet with Mayor Krantz and also to meet with the folks who created the Friends of Milton Hospital. This is a community-related effort to build a profile and community support towards the construction of a new facility that nobody disagrees is required. That's why we have advanced planning money to that hospital to get moving forward on it. We'll be looking for opportunities in the context of our capital budgets to move this project forward, recognizing

that there are many, many projects in the province that are very worthwhile and must be considered.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: The report went in last September, 2008. It has been sitting gathering dust since that time. It's time that report was released and the next phase of the planning take place.

The case for Milton becomes more convincing when you compare it to other high-growth areas such as in the Vaughan region, where there is high growth, but in the hospitals that surround Vaughan, the wait times are not nearly as bad as in the hospitals that surround Milton. I only use the comparison to demonstrate the unique situation that Milton is in as the fastest-growing community in North America.

1110

Minister, given these facts, will you stop the delays, make some decisions and help the people of Halton by expanding the Milton District Hospital?

Hon. George Smitherman: The one thing we can be grateful for from the question is that, unlike the member for Niagara West—Glanbrook—he says we're spending too much on infrastructure. It's true we have a lot under way with projects on the hospital side at Credit Valley, Hamilton Health Sciences—Hamilton General, Hamilton Health Sciences—Henderson General, Kingston General, London Health Sciences Centre, St. Joseph's Health Care, Montfort Hospital, Niagara Health System, North Bay Regional, Ottawa Hospital Regional Cancer Centre, Quinte Health Care, Rouge Valley Health System, Royal Victoria Hospital, Runnymede Healthcare, Sarnia Bluewater, Sault Area, St. Joe's London, Sudbury, Sunnybrook Health Sciences, Toronto Rehab, Trillium Health Centre and Woodstock General. There's not a government in the history of the province of Ontario that has gotten on with the task of building new hospital infrastructure—we know Milton has needs, and the people of Milton can count on this government to deliver on those. They know that that honourable member has best been known for his silence on this matter.

AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour le ministre des Finances.

Recommendation number 22 contained in the Financial Services Commission of Ontario's auto insurance review would slash insurance payouts for serious car crashes, which means it would impoverish the victims and enrich the insurance industry. The medical and rehab costs are now capped at \$100,000. The recommendation is to lower the cap for a lifetime to \$25,000. The cap for med rehab was \$25,000 about 20 years ago, but in the last 20 years costs have risen. Mortality rates have declined. Public sector rehab services have been decimated. Factoring in inflation, reducing the cap in 2009 to \$25,000 is inhumane.

Will the Minister of Finance stand in this House today and make it clear that he will reject this wrong-headed recommendation?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: As honourable members will know, our government for the first time launched a five-year review of auto insurance policy. Over the course of the last year, we have been receiving input from a variety of stakeholders, including accident victims. We expect final recommendations on that report by the fall, and at that point in time, once we've received feedback to all the recommendations, we will be in a position to make final determinations on what we will do.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary.

M^{me} France G  linas: The Financial Services Commission of Ontario tabled its report on March 31. People have until the end of this month to make recommendations. I want the minister to take into account the fact that a cut of 85% in health care for injured motorists and zero percent reduction in car insurance premiums is not a good deal. It would seriously damage the quality of rehab services provided to accident victims. The insurance industry is saying that they are not making money. Well, a 7.5% return in 2008, I agree, is not the 15% they're used to, but it's a good return on investment. A hundred thousand dollars is not a lot of money to buy a prosthesis, a wheelchair, modifications to your home, pay for rehab services, supplies etc. This cap needs to go up, not down.

I repeat: Will the minister state today in this House that he will reject this wrong-headed recommendation?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I would remind the member opposite that since we took office, auto insurance premiums are down 8.16%. We have the most comprehensive no-fault benefits of any province in Canada. We've fostered a more competitive marketplace for auto insurance. As a result, there are now approximately 20,000 drivers in the Facility Association, down from 204,000 in 2003.

The member opposite and her party have a rather checkered history on this issue. I would advise the member opposite that she shouldn't necessarily be advocating for increasing premium costs, which is what it sounds like she's going to do. She's going to pretend that you can keep increasing benefit after benefit and then not reduce rates. It's a fine balance to walk. As we do on all policies, this government will find the right balance that will be fair to consumers and fair to those accident victims.

STUDENT SUMMER JOBS

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: My question is to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. Recently, I've heard from many students in my community concerned about how the current economic climate is affecting them. Students are worried that the summer jobs they have come to rely on will not be available to them this summer.

Summer jobs are an important part of a student's learning process. The invaluable work experience they gain serves them well in all aspects of life. Ontario needs a highly skilled, highly educated workforce in order to be economically competitive. Students are the workforce of

our future, and they need summer jobs to help support their education and training costs. Let's not forget that businesses also need government help in these tough economic times if they are going to hire students.

To the minister, what are you doing to ensure that students have access to important opportunities through summer jobs?

Hon. John Milloy: I thank the honourable member for the question. He raises a very important issue. In the tough economic times, as we head into the summer months, we want to provide as much support as possible to Ontario students. That's why I'm very pleased that our recent budget contained a 57% increase to the Ontario summer jobs strategy, bringing spending this summer to nearly \$90 million. This expansion will mean that over 100,000 young people will benefit from support for summer employment opportunities. That's an increase of 27,000 students over last year, and this increase will continue next summer as well.

As I say, we recognize the economic hardships that are being faced by students. That's why we're very pleased to be able to offer this additional support.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: I know that many young people in my community will be pleased with this news.

There are many businesses in my community that benefit from hiring students, but during these difficult times some may be reluctant to hire. The Ontario Restaurant Hotel and Motel Association indicates that most small- and medium-sized hospitality operators could benefit from additional assistance that will allow them to hire on more young people, but some may be reluctant to do so because of increasing their labour costs.

Job creation is essential at a time like this, but, Minister, some young people need help in applying for jobs. This may be the first summer that a young person is looking for a job, and they'll need all the help with the basics of applying, from getting their resumé together to knowing where to look for employment.

To the minister, how do you plan on expanding summer job opportunities for both youth and businesses?

Hon. John Milloy: I'm pleased to inform the member and the House that the summer jobs strategy has a number of components. First, we're increasing the number of government jobs. These are jobs through a number of government ministries, both office jobs and jobs outdoors, such as the forest rangers program. Second, to address directly the first part of the honourable member's question, we're expanding the \$2-an-hour wage subsidy we provide to private companies to help them create more summer jobs. Third, we're expanding the program that helps students start their own summer business. Finally, my ministry is expanding our Employment Ontario summer jobs service so that if a student needs help with a resumé, interview skills or job search, they're able to receive that additional assistance.

As I said in my previous answer, through this strategy we hope to find jobs for 100,000 students—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: My question is to the Minister of Finance. Our finance critic, Mr. Sterling, and I recently met with representatives of the Alliance of Community Medical and Rehabilitation Providers, who apprised us of concerns they have related to regulatory changes to auto insurance that you're currently considering and apparently plan to make a decision on by the end of June. In their view, the changes will reduce protection for victims in automobile accidents and shift the cost and work burdens onto publicly funded services.

Minister, do you share those concerns, and if not, why not?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The Leader of the Opposition is correct. We have engaged in a dialogue over the course of the last year with a variety of stakeholders in the insurance industry, as well as consumers—as we said we would, the first five-year review that's been undertaken in order to set the regulatory framework moving forward.

As I indicated in an earlier question to the third party, we do in fact have to find a balance. But what I can say to the member is, since we first changed auto insurance regulation legislation, premiums have come down by 8.16%; under his party and their government, they went up more than 10% per year. We are working through the recommendations we have received from a variety of stakeholders, and we'll find the right balance to both protect those accident victims who rely on their insurance and consumers who pay the premium. And I look forward to hearing more from other stakeholders before the conclusion of the consultation period.

1120

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: I'll just touch on two concerns: the reduction of the basic accident benefit from \$100,000 to \$25,000 with no premium reduction, and the lack of public awareness about these changes. I would suggest that most Ontarians are completely unaware. The alliance pointed out that many of the 60,000 people, on average, injured every year in auto accidents in Ontario are seriously hurt and require months, and sometimes years, of rehabilitation, and contends that the proposed benefit reduction will only provide a fraction of what victims will need to put their lives back together.

Minister, will you consider extending your consultation deadline, to consult broadly and give the public an opportunity to know about these proposals?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: No. Governments do have to take decisions. We've had a very extensive and protracted consultation. I, in fact, have met with the group the member opposite referred to.

It would be nice to remind Ontario consumers, however, that in the last three years that that member and his party were in office, insurance premiums went up 43%. Here is what the Insurance Bureau of Canada says: Ontario has seen aggregate savings of \$4.5 billion since 2003, which represents "the largest premium reduction ever seen in Canada."

We are working through and have had extensive consultations. We have to take decisions. We're going to take those decisions and we'll debate our choices here in this House and right across Ontario. But what we know is this: We won't see the kinds of premium increases that he and his party foisted on Ontario consumers when they were in—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

FOREST INDUSTRY

Mr. Howard Hampton: A question to the Acting Premier: Yesterday, in estimates committee, the Minister of Economic Development gave a thoughtful rationale for the McGuinty government's contribution of \$1.25 billion to the financial restructuring of Chrysler. Minister Bryant said that if Ontario failed to advance the \$1.25 billion while the US government was advancing money to Chrysler, then Chrysler plants in Windsor and Brampton would close production, move to the United States and thousands of good jobs would be lost in Windsor and Brampton.

AbitibiBowater is also undergoing financial restructuring and 4,000 good jobs are at risk in communities like Thunder Bay, yet the McGuinty Liberals have not advanced one penny in that financial restructuring. My question: Why is the McGuinty government completely missing in action in the financial restructuring of AbitibiBowater, where 4,000 good jobs—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Deputy?

Hon. George Smitherman: To the Minister of Natural Resources.

Hon. Donna H. Cansfield: I'm pleased to respond to the member's question. We're very concerned, obviously, about AbitibiBowater and the restructuring that they're undergoing, and we recognize and realize that this is going to be very complex. AbitibiBowater is a worldwide company. It owes some \$8.8 billion and has some 40 pension plans worldwide. It has some very significant challenges, in that the production of pulp, primarily, has plummeted in the world, and they control 43% of that particular market, which no longer exists.

As they're going through these challenges, as we have in the past, we will continue to work with Abitibi. We have provided significant dollars—about \$156 million—to Abitibi during the process prior to their bankruptcy filing, and as they go through these challenges, we'll be there to work with them, and we've made that indication.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Howard Hampton: I understood the rationale given by Minister Bryant. I recognize that car purchases have plummeted and that the production of vehicles has plummeted in North America. I recognize, though, that if Ontario does not advance the \$1.25 billion to Chrysler, thousands of good jobs will be lost in Brampton and Windsor.

The Quebec government has advanced \$100 million of debtor-in-possession financing in the financial restructuring.

turing of AbitibiBowater. This means that the Quebec government will be at the table and will be in a very powerful position when decisions are made on which mills to close, which mills to sell and which mills to keep. I don't think Quebec will be advocating to keep mills in Ontario open.

My question again: Quebec is there; Ontario is there in auto restructuring. Why is the McGuinty government completely missing in action when it comes to—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Minister?

Hon. Donna H. Cansfield: In fact, there are about 2,000 jobs with AbitibiBowater in northern Ontario. There's no question that there are residual jobs as well. The fact of the matter is, they are going through restructuring. We have provided some \$22 million to the Fort Frances-Rainy River biomass plant. There's no question that we have been working with them as they go through that. We are prepared to continue to do that. They have their challenges, they have debts that they must meet, and they have been provided extraordinary amounts of money by this province through energy rebates, direct dollars in grants and direct dollars in terms of helping them prior to the restructuring requirements.

We've been there all along for Abitibi. We know that they still have some water rights that we have to deal with. Again, we're more than prepared to work with them. The challenges are that they are in CCAA—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

HEALTHY LIVING

Ms. Sophia Aggelonitis: My question is for the Minister of Health Promotion. In May 2008, federal, provincial and territorial ministers responsible for sport, physical activity and recreation set Canada's first-ever national physical activity targets for children and youth aged five to 19. One of the targets is to increase the proportion of children and youth who participate in 90 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity by seven percentage points over the next six years.

In fact, Hamiltonians have taken this to heart. I recently had the opportunity to participate in the opening of the Les Chater YMCA on Hamilton Mountain. This wonderful facility, and facilities like this all across the city and province, will play an important role in meeting these targets.

What is the government doing to ensure that we are on the right track when it comes to supporting Ontario's children and youth to lead healthy, active lives?

Hon. Margaret R. Best: First of all, I would like to thank the member from Hamilton Mountain for her work as she continues to further health promotion activities throughout the province. I also want to say that I was very pleased to have attended the Les Chater YMCA opening with the member.

The McGuinty government continues its investment in Ontario's children and youth. We are also investing in our newcomer families and our off-reserve aboriginal communities in furthering our goal of building a healthier Ontario.

We have recently partnered with the Public Health Agency of Canada to deliver \$3.4 million over three years towards projects that promote physical activity and healthy eating among targeted groups.

To date, the McGuinty government has invested \$1.9 million in—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Ms. Sophia Aggelonitis: Ontario has a comprehensive approach to increase everyone's access to sport and physical activity. I know that the Public Health Agency of Canada is an important partner in this goal. I believe that we must remain committed to new physical activity and healthy living projects that create new opportunities and remove barriers for participation in healthy living.

Is the bilateral agreement signed by the Minister of Health Promotion and our federal counterparts consistent with the goals of the McGuinty government's strategy to promote health and fitness for Ontarians?

Hon. Margaret R. Best: I'll continue: The federal government is investing \$1.5 million in this project, and we are hopeful that this is only the first of many agreements to come. We will continue to partner with our federal counterparts in delivering healthy eating and active living projects for all Ontarians. We will build on our partnerships with organizations such as the Big Brothers and Big Sisters of Canada, the YMCA and the Ontario Federation of Indian Friendship Centres to promote overall wellness and physical activity, which are essential ingredients to building strong, healthy children and youth. Friendship centre participants and communities will increase healthy eating and physical activity levels through the urban aboriginal healthy living program.

Our government has already invested \$32 million in supporting our communities and increasing physical activity province-wide. This year, the investment is a further testament of our commitment to continuing to move forward in supporting Ontarians—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

1130

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: My question is to the Acting Premier. Could you tell us about the urgency of the announcement made by the Premier this morning?

Hon. George Smitherman: Yes, I'm very pleased to tell the honourable member that the urgency of the matter that was announced by the Premier is about the economic circumstances for the people of the province of Ontario.

Since we came to office, our Premier has led a variety of efforts to enhance the trade connections between Ontario and jurisdictions in growing economies around the world. One of those really extraordinary opportunities is in our relationship with India. Canada and India enjoy very, very strong relations, elements of culture and connection that are extraordinary. Our population here is so intensely positively impacted by people who have come

from India to enrich our land, and they bring with them the skill set to build business relationships.

Today, the Premier of the province of Ontario was talking about a trade mission to India, which will enhance economic opportunities for the people of the province of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: Well, I understand this is all going to happen in December, and I find it passing strange that this government changed the time of question period from early afternoon to 10:30, ostensibly so ministers and the Premier could go out and make announcements. Now recently, in the last five days, the Premier has twice made announcements during question period.

I ask you today: Do you want to move question period back to the afternoon in order that we can accommodate and make sure the Premier and ministers are here?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I would just remind the honourable member regarding references to members in attendance or not.

Minister?

Hon. George Smitherman: But I do think if the honourable member just wanted to swivel around a little bit in her seat, she'd get a pretty quick answer to the—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): And I would just remind the minister that that response is not helpful either.

Hon. George Smitherman: The Ontario trade mission is focused on clean, green solutions in India. We had an opportunity recently with the Canada India Foundation to stage a two-day conference here in the province of Ontario, that our government helped to sponsor, which brought leading individuals from India looking at the opportunities to build trade connections in the context of the emerging green economy.

As more people make it into the middle class in India, the pressure over electricity demand grows and offers a wide array of opportunities for stronger business relationships and for some of the people operating in the green energy sector here to enjoy the opportunity to sell their products into this bold market that is emerging in India.

This is what our Premier is up to, working hard today to make sure there's enhanced employment for people—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

HOSPITAL SERVICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour le ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée.

Strathroy and Area Concerned Citizens are in the gallery today with petitions from their entire community. They are angry about the recent service cuts at Strathroy Middlesex General Hospital. Two nurses were eliminated from the breast screening program. For women in that area, that means a loss of a community base, replaced by long wait times and long travel times.

We know that early detection is crucial to increasing breast cancer survivor rates. Why is the McGuinty gov-

ernment cutting essential, community-based services for breast cancer screening in the Strathroy area?

Hon. David Caplan: I can't agree with the member opposite. In fact, the investments in Strathroy Middlesex General Hospital recently include more than a \$5-million increase in base funding since 2003-04—that's a 30% increase in funding to this hospital; over \$55 million toward the South West Local Health Integration Network over a three-year, local aging-at-home strategy; \$90,000—73 general surgeries. That's an addition of almost \$4.2 million dollars in total funding the hospital has received since 2004 to reduce wait times. That's over 1,600 more procedures.

There's considerably more, but the member really needs to get her facts straight.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The time for question period has ended.

DEFERRED VOTES

GREEN ENERGY AND GREEN ECONOMY ACT, 2009

LOI DE 2009 SUR L'ÉNERGIE VERTE ET L'ÉCONOMIE VERTE

Deferred vote on the motion for third reading of Bill 150, An Act to enact the Green Energy Act, 2009 and to build a green economy, to repeal the Energy Conservation Leadership Act, 2006 and the Energy Efficiency Act and to amend other statutes / Projet de loi 150, Loi édictant la Loi de 2009 sur l'énergie verte et visant à développer une économie verte, abrogeant la Loi de 2006 sur le leadership en matière de conservation de l'énergie et la Loi sur le rendement énergétique et modifiant d'autres lois.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1135 to 1140.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Mr. Smitherman has moved third reading of Bill 150.

All those in favour will please rise one a time and be recorded by the Clerk.

Ayes

Aggelonitis, Sophia
Albanese, Laura
Arthurs, Wayne
Balkissoon, Bas
Bartolucci, Rick
Bentley, Christopher
Brotten, Laurel C.
Brown, Michael A.
Brownell, Jim
Bryant, Michael
Cansfield, Donna H.
Caplan, David
Carroll, Aileen
Chan, Michael
Colle, Mike
Delaney, Bob
Dickson, Joe
Dombrowsky, Leona
Duguid, Brad
Duncan, Dwight

Flynn, Kevin Daniel
Fonseca, Peter
Gerretsen, John
Gélinas, France
Gravelle, Michael
Horwath, Andrea
Hoy, Pat
Jaczek, Helena
Jeffrey, Linda
Johnson, Rick
Kular, Kuldip
Lalonde, Jean-Marc
Leal, Jeff
Levac, Dave
Marchese, Rosario
McMeekin, Ted
McNeely, Phil
Meilleur, Madeleine
Miller, Paul
Milloy, John

Mitchell, Carol
Moridi, Reza
Pendergast, Leeanna
Phillips, Gerry
Ramal, Khalil
Ramsay, David
Rinaldi, Lou
Ruprecht, Tony
Sandals, Liz
Smith, Monique
Smitherman, George
Sousa, Charles
Tabuns, Peter
Takhar, Harinder S.
Van Bommel, Maria
Watson, Jim
Wilkinson, John
Wynne, Kathleen O.
Zimmer, David

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): All those opposed?

Dombrowsky, Leona
Duguid, Brad
Duncan, Dwight
Flynn, Kevin Daniel

Mitchell, Carol
Moridi, Reza
Munro, Julia
Ouellette, Jerry J.

Yakabuski, John
Zimmer, David

Nays

Arnott, Ted
Bailey, Robert
Chudleigh, Ted
Hardeman, Ernie
Miller, Norm

Munro, Julia
Ouellette, Jerry J.
Runciman, Robert W.
Shurman, Peter
Sterling, Norman W.

Wilson, Jim
Witmer, Elizabeth
Yakabuski, John

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller):
The ayes are 59; the nays are 13.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I declare the motion carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

Third reading agreed to.

TOBACCO DAMAGES AND HEALTH CARE COSTS RECOVERY ACT, 2009

LOI DE 2009 SUR LE RECOUVREMENT DU MONTANT DES DOMMAGES ET DU COÛT DES SOINS DE SANTÉ IMPUTABLES AU TABAC

Deferred vote on the motion for third reading of Bill 155, An Act to permit the Province to recover damages and health care costs incurred because of tobacco related diseases and to make a complementary amendment to the Limitations Act, 2002 / Projet de loi 155, Loi autorisant la province à recouvrer le montant des dommages et du coût des soins de santé engagés en raison des maladies liées au tabac et à apporter une modification complémentaire à la Loi de 2002 sur la prescription des actions.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1144 to 1149.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Mr. Bentley has moved third reading of Bill 155. All those in favour will please rise one at a time and be recorded by the Clerk.

Ayes

Aggelonitis, Sophia
Albanese, Laura
Arnott, Ted
Arthurs, Wayne
Bailey, Robert
Balkissoon, Bas
Bartolucci, Rick
Bentley, Christopher
Brotan, Laurel C.
Brown, Michael A.
Brownell, Jim
Bryant, Michael
Cansfield, Donna H.
Caplan, David
Carroll, Aileen
Chan, Michael
Chudleigh, Ted
Colle, Mike
Delaney, Bob
Dickson, Joe
DiNovo, Cheri

Fonseca, Peter
Gerretsen, John
Gélinas, France
Gravelle, Michael
Hardeman, Ernie
Horwath, Andrea
Hoy, Pat
Jaczek, Helena
Jeffrey, Linda
Johnson, Rick
Kular, Kuldeep
Lalonde, Jean-Marc
Leal, Jeff
Levac, Dave
Marchese, Rosario
McMeekin, Ted
McNeely, Phil
Meilleur, Madeleine
Miller, Norm
Miller, Paul
Milloy, John

Pendergast, Leeanna
Phillips, Gerry
Ramal, Khalil
Ramsay, David
Rinaldi, Lou
Runciman, Robert W.
Ruprecht, Tony
Sandals, Liz
Shurman, Peter
Smith, Monique
Smitherman, George
Sousa, Charles
Sterling, Norman W.
Tabuns, Peter
Takhur, Harinder S.
Van Bommel, Maria
Watson, Jim
Wilkinson, John
Wilson, Jim
Witmer, Elizabeth
Wynne, Kathleen O.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller):
The ayes are 73; the nays are 0.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I declare the motion passed.

Be it resolved in that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

Third reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): This House stands recessed until 1 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1152 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Gerry Phillips: I appreciate the opportunity to introduce—I have a wonderful page here called Grace Lee, and her father, Jason Lee, is here in the public gallery.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

TECUMSETH NORTH ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Mr. Jim Wilson: My statement is directed to Premier McGuinty, and it concerns the possible closure of Tecumseth North Elementary School near Beeton.

I'm on the side of the parents and students at Tecumseth North, who were led to believe by this Premier that rural schools would not be closed under his watch. In fact, it was the Premier who said in the last election, "Rural schools help keep communities strong, which is why we're not only committed to keeping them open—but strengthening them." This was nothing more than an empty promise made by a promise-breaking Premier.

Tecumseth North is an important part of our rural community. As Lee Anne Rivett put it in a letter to the Alliston Herald:

"I fail to understand how closing this school could possibly be beneficial to the children. The atmosphere and spirit inside the walls is nothing but a legacy. The warmth of learning can be felt throughout the school. It is an enriched environment in which I'm proud my children are part of."

There's more. At a recent public meeting, concerned parent Kerri-Lynne Hill said it just perfectly when she said, "Tecumseth North isn't just a school, it's the basis of our community. These kids don't live in subdivisions—they live on farms. The school is where they make their friends."

Dalton McGuinty has every tool necessary to keep Tecumseth North open, and I'm urging him to keep his promise: Save this school and keep other rural schools open, as he said he would.

PROFESSIONAL HOCKEY FRANCHISE

Mr. Paul Miller: I'm a man on a mission: I want NHL hockey back in Hamilton. I want to thank the members for granting permission for me to wear the Hockey Night in Hamilton jersey in this House today.

Hamilton is a great location for an NHL team. Within an hour's commute are hockey fans in the Golden Horseshoe, Toronto to Niagara Falls; fans from Brantford, Cambridge, Kitchener-Waterloo areas; and an hour and a half away are Woodstock and London hockey fans.

Hamilton has an international airport, major highway access, GO Transit access, which stands to be improved with Metrolinx and the Pan Am Games.

And just think about the dream of having the NHL closer to many young hockey players in the Hamilton region. Kids who could not get to Toronto or Buffalo to see their hockey heroes would have the chance to catch a glimpse, get an autograph or even get to a game.

And the jobs that would be created—refitting the Coliseum with Hamilton-produced steel products; local businesses would see new customers and new businesses would start up.

Hockey is a significant part of our culture and history. The Hamilton Tigers were an NHL team from 1920-25.

Fan support is proven. Recently, season ticket sales for a proposed NHL franchise exceeded 13,000.

My NDP colleagues and I look forward to working with Hamilton city council and the province to bring an NHL franchise to Hamilton.

TOWN OF HAWKESBURY

VILLE DE HAWKESBURY

Mr. Jean-Marc Lalonde: It is my pleasure to share with you and the members of this House the celebration of the 150th anniversary of the town of Hawkesbury.

La ville de Hawkesbury, ainsi que le comité organisateur, ont présenté la programmation des activités à l'occasion des fêtes du 150^e de Hawkesbury. Les organisateurs se sont fixé comme objectif premier que ces fêtes soient célébrées dans un esprit de rassemblement et qu'elles demeurent accessibles pour tous. Pour l'occasion, le grand spectacle du 150^e anniversaire, L'écho du Long Sault, sera le grand coup d'envoi des festivités avec la participation des gens locaux.

Durant ces festivités, la participation, la beauté, la créativité, la force et la richesse de sa population, par ses actions, vont façonner de mille manières la ville et son histoire.

I encourage all members of this House and their families to visit the beautiful and lively town of Hawkesbury, where the sun rises in Ontario.

WORKPLACE SAFETY AND INSURANCE BOARD

Mr. Robert Bailey: It will come as no surprise to anyone on this side of the House that now the Workplace

Safety and Insurance Board is admitting they're in a financial mess. In a release earlier this month, the WSIB quietly announced that the unfunded liability of the board—that is, the difference between assets and liabilities—has reached \$11.5 billion for this year. That is up from \$8.1 billion last year—an almost 40% increase in one year.

The chairman of the WSIB, Mr. Steve Mahoney, also waved the white flag in regard to the board's solemn commitment to eliminate the unfunded liability by 2014. They are now admitting it can't be done. This was their cornerstone commitment to the workers of Ontario; now they admit it can't be done.

When we were debating Bill 119, we warned the government that this was going to happen, and they continued to express confidence in the board of the WSIB. During the Bill 119 debate, we called for the provincial auditor to be called in to do a complete audit of the board. I would like to know, given the financial mess that the WSIB is in, does the government still have confidence in the board and its senior management? Will they do the right thing and call in the Provincial Auditor?

ASSOCIATION CANADIENNE- FRANÇAISE DE L'ONTARIO

Mr. Khalil Ramal: It's my pleasure to bring good news to the House from my city of London. The Association canadienne-française de l'Ontario, an active organization that offers numerous services, was awarded \$105,000 by the Ontario Trillium Foundation to aid their small business development project. Since its establishment, over 10 small businesses have profited from their services. Minister Matthews, Minister Bentley and I, alongside with Yacouba Traoré, presented the grant, knowing it will serve the community at large.

The London-Sarnia branch of the ACFO has been serving the Ontario francophone community for 26 years. They have committed to bringing francophone affairs and issues to the forefront, ensuring that their community is never neglected. We are lucky to have this organization in the community, as it serves as a central hub for many essential services including employment, skills and newcomer development.

I would like to express my appreciation to ACFO for serving Ontario francophones like myself. If it was not for such agencies, many people from my riding would not have established a stable and successful life. As well, I would like to make notable mention of the Trillium Foundation, as they have been an asset to the people of Ontario.

SHERWOOD HIGH SCHOOL POVERTY EVENT

Ms. Sophia Aggelonitis: On Tuesday, May 4, I had the opportunity to visit with students from Sherwood high school in my riding of Hamilton Mountain as they showed support for people living in poverty. They did

this in a very unique way. They spent the night outside and slept on a football field. Even though the temperature went down to 4 degrees that night, they were not deterred. The next morning, they woke up at sunrise, had breakfast and went to class without a shower or other conveniences.

I was able to visit with these students that evening. Not only did they demonstrate superb organizational skills in planning their camp-out, but they also showed their compassion and their ability to put themselves in others' shoes. Sherwood principal Randy Gallant and teacher Mike Murkovich also deserve great recognition for their contributions to this event.

Students at Sherwood demonstrated that Hamilton's community spirit is alive and well in people of all ages. These students sent the message that poverty is one of the key issues that needs to be addressed in our city and in the province, and I'm fully committed to helping them in any way I can. I'm very proud of them.

GENERAL MOTORS TRUCK PLANT

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: Today marks the end of an era. At approximately 11 a.m., the last truck to be produced in Oshawa will run off the GM line. Well over 2,600 workers will have left today and will never return again to the GM plant in south Oshawa.

In 44 years, the truck plant has produced over 10 million trucks, vans and school buses. In 2000, a record 323,034 vehicles were produced in that plant. In 1965, when the plant first opened, both John Gordon and James Roche were both president and George Burt was the UAW regional director.

1310

The truck plant has won numerous J.D. Power Awards for its world-renowned quality, yet times have caught up with us, haven't they? Oshawa, the region of Durham and the province of Ontario were the big winners with all the truck plant's contributions, both in vehicles and every other aspect of life. Over the years, General Motors and its workers have contributed millions to the United Way, local libraries, schools, Boy Scouts, Girl Guides and many more volunteer organizations and charities throughout our province.

Once again, even in closing, General Motors and its workers are giving. You see, the very last truck that will come off the line today will be raffled off and those profits will be going to Toronto's Sick Kids. Yes, it is the end of an era.

CULTURAL FESTIVALS

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: As Canadians, we are fortunate to be living in a country that embraces the many cultures of the world. Cultural festivals are an integral part of the Canadian social fabric. They foster fellowship among immigrants and their communities and offer a wonderful opportunity to celebrate our nation's rich multicultural history and heritage.

In the next week, the dynamic Portuguese community will be celebrating a number of important events. The president of the Azores, Mr. Carlos César, will be in Toronto to kick off Azores Day in my riding. The president of Casa dos Açores, Mr. Carlos Botelho, tells me that this will be only the second time in its long history that Azores Day will be declared outside of the Azores. College Street will be closed off after 12 noon at Dufferin Street on May 30 and we expect over 20,000 Azorean Canadians to celebrate.

The week of June 1 will see spectacular performances, and the week highlights the Portugal Day parade. Portugal Week chairman Jose Eustaquio expects over 50,000 people to attend the largest Portuguese parade in North America. All of you are invited to witness the excitement and the enthusiasm of Portuguese Canadians.

A special tribute should go to the many Portuguese clubs and organizations which dedicate their efforts to pass on to the children the love of language and family tradition, while at the same time making a remarkable contribution to the betterment of life in Canada. Certainly they deserve our high respect and our gratitude.

INTERNATIONAL DAY AGAINST HOMOPHOBIA

Mrs. Linda Jeffrey: I rise today to acknowledge International Day Against Homophobia, which will be marked this Sunday, May 17. The theme for this year is "Homosexuality Knows No Borders."

I believe this nation's strength is derived from its multiculturalism. Ontario is a province that prides itself on its diversity and where sexual orientation is seen as a basic right. However, when we welcome new Ontarians and embrace their right to protect their culture and practise their religion, we sometimes forget that with all the good in what they add to the mosaic of our society they often bring with them certain mores and prejudices.

Ontario and Canada are not immune to homophobia. We cannot sit smugly in this chamber, proud of our Charter of Rights and Freedoms, without acknowledging that there is still more work to be done. Just as we export our model for peace and tolerance to the world, so too must we work within our borders to promote the growth of harmonious relationships among people, regardless of their sexual orientation.

Pierre Elliot Trudeau once said, "The state has no business in the bedrooms of the nation," but for so many around the world the state does not stop at the bedroom door. Restrictions on travel, ownership and the most basic human desire of starting a family have turned gays and lesbians around this globe into less-than-second-class citizens.

I'm proud that our great province of Ontario has and will continue to open its doors to the world without conditions and without exception. Today I invite everyone here to celebrate International Day Against Homophobia and help put an end to discrimination based on sexual orientation.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON FINANCE AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS

Ms. Sophia Aggelonitis: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs and move its adoption.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Tonia Grannum): Your committee begs to report the following bill as amended:

Bill 162, An Act respecting the budget measures and other matters/Projet de loi 162, Loi concernant les mesures budgétaires et d'autres questions.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed? Agreed.

Report adopted.

Pursuant to the order of the House dated Tuesday, April 21, 2009, the bill is ordered for third reading.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

HUMANITARIAN CRISIS IN SRI LANKA CRISE HUMANITAIRE AU SRI LANKA

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I rise in the House today to express the shared concern Ontarians feel over the humanitarian crisis in Sri Lanka. To quote a spokesperson for the UN, "The large-scale killing of civilians over the weekend, including the deaths of more than 100 children, shows that that bloodbath has become a reality." The UN tells us now that the number of Sri Lankan civilians killed in recent months is well into the thousands. We're not talking here about government troops or separatist rebels; we're talking about thousands of innocent civilians—innocent men, women and children.

Ce conflit, cette tragédie, pèse lourd sur les Canadiens et Canadiennes de descendance tamoule.

For the thousands of Ontarians of Tamil descent who gathered on the front lawn of Queen's Park yesterday and for others in the Tamil community who could not make it here, this is a personal tragedy. Those victims way over there in Sri Lanka are their mothers, their fathers, their brothers, their sisters, their uncles, their aunts, their nephews, their nieces, their cousins and their friends.

All Ontarians should know that in our province and in our communities, Canadians of Tamil descent are waiting anxiously every day for news about their loved ones. They are desperate to know what's happening, but there's hardly any information to satisfy them, let alone comfort them. They are worried for the safety of their family and worried for the safety of their friends. Thousands of civilians have been caught in the crossfire of this conflict, and that means that the horrors that have occurred in northern Sri Lanka are felt acutely here at home.

As you may know, my daughter worked as an aid worker in Sri Lanka for close to a year. From her, I have learned that Sri Lanka is a beautiful country with warm and caring people, but there is conflict there. I know what it's like to wait by the phone when you've heard that there was violence in that area and you can't get the details, so I have some very, very modest understanding of the fear and anxiety felt by our Tamil community.

Nous vivons dans la meilleure province du meilleur pays au monde. Notre province vit dans la paix et ne connaît pas la guerre. Nous vivons dans une province où chacun de nous a le droit de faire connaître ses inquiétudes et de protester pacifiquement et dans le respect des lois.

We live in the greatest province in the best country in the world. Ours is a province that is peaceful and free from war. Ours is a province where each of us have the right to voice our concerns and protest peacefully and lawfully. And just as the tragedy unfolding in Sri Lanka cannot excuse breaking the law here, neither could breaking our laws excuse our silence on this tragedy. That's why I'm making this statement today.

When innocent civilians die in northern Sri Lanka, it's not just a matter of concern to the Tamils in Sri Lanka; it's not just a matter of concern to Tamils in Canada; it's a matter of concern to all of us.

Yesterday, there was a demonstration on the front lawn of Queen's Park. Many thousands gathered there. It was one of the largest and most peaceful demonstrations our Legislature has ever witnessed. There were families there, children, parents and grandparents, and I could see concern, anxiety, worry and fear. Many words were spoken and many of those I did not understand, but what I heard from the people out there could be summed up in two words: Help us.

The members of the Tamil community here in Ontario are part of our Ontario family, and we see those innocent civilians who are being injured and killed in northern Sri Lanka as part of our extended family.

Because of the diversity of our people in Ontario, we are connected in a real way to every region, every culture and every faith, everywhere. We are blessed with great diversity. That is our privilege, and with that privilege comes a responsibility to stand up and speak out when human rights are being abused, wherever that might occur. So today, on behalf of Ontarians, I urge the federal government and the UN to take what steps they can to bring this conflict to a peaceful end.

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J'encourage le gouvernement fédéral et les Nations Unies à continuer d'exercer des pressions sur toutes les parties impliquées pour que l'on puisse en arriver à un règlement pacifique de ce conflit.

Again, I call for journalists, aid workers and international observers to be allowed to enter into northern Sri Lanka.

The loss of innocent lives is never acceptable, and Canadians of Tamil descent deserve the support of their government to keep their families safe. Ontario is com-

mitted to the promotion, protection and advancement of human rights, where all people are valued and treated with dignity.

Finally, on behalf of Ontarians, my thoughts and my heart go out to all those caught in this terrible conflict and to all those here who are yearning for peace in Sri Lanka.

Interruption.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I would just remind all our visitors who are joining us today that we certainly welcome you to observe the proceedings but ask that you not participate in the proceedings. Thank you.

Responses? The leader of Her Majesty's loyal opposition.

Applause.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: I would suggest you hold your applause.

On behalf of the Progressive Conservative caucus, I'm pleased to have this opportunity to express our appreciation and understanding of the concerns that so many Canadians of Tamil origin have with respect to the situation in Sri Lanka today and the continuing loss of life. We share those concerns. It is unconscionable that innocents are being caught in the crossfire between factions and lives are being lost.

The number of Ontarians assembled on the lawn at Queen's Park yesterday was a testament to the depth of concern within the Canadian Tamil community. It was also a testament to the freedoms afforded in this great country: freedom of speech, the freedom of assembly. These are freedoms that, regrettably, are not afforded in many countries throughout the world, and I suspect many of the people on the lawn came to Canada because of those rights. They are freedoms that should be respected and valued, not abused. Unfortunately, over the past week, they were abused and laws were broken, the most egregious of those the blockade of the Gardiner Expressway, a major artery and an economic lifeline through the city of Toronto.

The Progressive Conservative caucus, unlike the McGuinty Liberal government, is strongly supportive of equal application of the rule of law. The law cannot treat one Ontarian differently than another based on the group to which they belong. Regrettably, we've seen that democratic and historic principle eroded in Caledonia under the government's current approach, and undoubtedly, in our view, the government's indifference to lawlessness in their continuing efforts to appease lawbreakers in that region encouraged the actions that occurred this past Sunday.

The blockade of the Gardiner was without doubt counterproductive. Ontarians are generous and understanding people and undoubtedly concerned over the loss of innocent life, be it in Darfur, the Congo or Sri Lanka. But they are not supportive of in-your-face abuse of our laws and the public promotion of an internationally recognized terrorist organization.

With rights go responsibilities, and one of the most important of those responsibilities is to obey the laws of

the country you live in. The Progressive Conservative member for Newmarket-Aurora, Frank Klees, has met with Tamil community representatives and has written the Prime Minister relaying concerns we share with many in the Tamil community. We will continue to support your lawful efforts to have those concerns heard and heeded.

In closing, I want to reference an article in today's Toronto Star that indicates the Liberal caucus is now getting engaged in this issue because they could lose seats in the next provincial election. The Star story quotes an unnamed Liberal MPP as saying, "If we're not careful, there are at least five ridings we could lose if the Tamils go over to the NDP."

If that's the real motivation behind the fine words and the resolution, we would be disappointed but not surprised. The Liberal Party consistently portrays itself as the defender of the downtrodden, but as we discovered in the nannygate affair, protecting Liberal interests always takes priority.

I can assure you that the Progressive Conservative caucus is always prepared to speak out on wrongdoings and suffering wherever they occur, and we will always do it for the right reasons: our concern for our fellow man and woman.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Responses?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Ontario New Democrats join with the Tamil Canadian community and all other concerned Canadians who believe in standing up for human rights in reiterating our unequivocal condemnation of the mounting civilian casualties in Sri Lanka due to the recently intensified fighting. More than a quarter of a million people have been affected, and there appears to be no end in sight to this humanitarian crisis. The United Nations estimates that more than 6,500 civilians have been killed in the past three months alone, with casualties mounting each and every day.

Canada cannot wait any longer to take strong and immediate action to address this worsening situation. That's why our leader, Andrea Horwath, has twice written to Prime Minister Harper asking for positive Canadian intervention.

Faced with the daily uncertainty of knowing whether their loved ones in Sri Lanka are dead or alive, and what kind of danger they are in, members of Canada's Tamil Canadian community, a vital part of this community right here and of this country, alongside numerous allies from the broader community, have attempted to draw increased attention to the situation through a variety of orderly demonstrations. They are to be commended for the largely peaceful nature of their very well coordinated efforts. They have stood for their families, their sisters and brothers around the world, and they stood because they know that people's lives are in the balance. New Democrats join with them to call on the government of Canada to add its voice to the growing international community calling for an immediate ceasefire by the Sri Lankan government so that the humanitarian conditions can be addressed. New Democrats will continue to call

on our federal government to apply diplomatic pressure on the Sri Lankan President to end the conflict with work with the UN Security Council toward a lasting peace process.

Despite the ongoing protests that have raised awareness of the situation, the Harper government has been mostly silent. That government should be demanding that the embargo on food and medicine for humanitarian aid be lifted and non-governmental organizations be given assistance to those who require assistance. Additionally, the region where the fighting is taking place must be opened up to international observers and the media so that the entire world can see what is happening. New Democrats also call on all levels of government to help bereaved Tamil Canadians with adequate support services and counselling in their own language.

No more innocent lives can be lost in Sri Lanka. There must be no further bloodshed. Members of this Legislature must take a united stand to send a clear message, that Canada is on the side of peace and of human rights, and we must exert pressure at the international stage to bring this terrible conflict to an end once and for all. New Democrats here at Queen's Park and on Parliament Hill will continue to deliver this message until there is peace and justice throughout Sri Lanka.

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PETITIONS

ELMVALE DISTRICT HIGH SCHOOL

Mr. Jim Wilson: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Elmvale District High School is an important part of the community of Elmvale and surrounding area; and

"Whereas the school is widely recognized as having high educational standards and is well-known for producing exceptional graduates who have gone on to work as professionals in health care, agriculture, community safety, the trades and many other fields that give back to the community; and

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty promised during the 2007 election that he would keep rural schools open when he declared that 'Rural schools help keep communities strong, which is why we're not only committed to keeping them open—but strengthening them'; and

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty found \$12 million to keep school swimming pools open in Toronto but hasn't found any money to keep an actual rural school open in Elmvale;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Minister of Education support the citizens of Elmvale and flow funding to the local school board so that Elmvale District High School can remain open to serve the vibrant community of Elmvale and surrounding area."

I want to thank Mrs. Marian Currie of Elmvale for sending that to me.

CEMETERIES

Mr. Jim Brownell: I have a petition signed by a number of folks from Ottawa, and it reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontario's cemeteries are an important part of our cultural heritage, and Ontario's inactive cemeteries are constantly at risk of closure and removal; and

"Ontario's cemeteries are an irreplaceable part of the province's cultural heritage;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"The government must pass Bill 149, the Inactive Cemeteries Protection Act, 2009, to prohibit the relocation of inactive cemeteries in the province of Ontario."

As I agree with the petition, I shall sign it and send it to the clerks' table.

PENSION PLANS

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: I have this petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, which is signed by thousands of people.

"Whereas Ontarians are currently denied full discretionary access to their locked-in retirement accounts (LIRAs, LIRFs, LIFs); and

"Whereas the monies within these locked-in accounts have already been earned as deferred salary, i.e., they are not government handouts or bailouts; and

"Whereas Ontario pensioners have already demonstrated throughout life that they are quite capable of prudent financial management, given that they have raised families, bought and sold homes and automobiles, managed investments, paid their taxes, operated businesses, among other successes; and

"Whereas similar legislation passed in Saskatchewan in 2002 has been successful and has demonstrated the wisdom and prudence of retirees; and

"Whereas a quick and immediate unlocking of pension funds would act as a significant and timely stimulus to the economy during the current recession;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to support into law the private member's bill recently tabled by Mr. Ted Chudleigh, MPP Halton, allowing all Ontario pensioners, at age 55, full discretionary access to all monies accrued within their locked-in retirement accounts."

I agree with this petition, obviously, I sign my name and pass it to Rabeb on her last day. And I look forward to the debate this afternoon and the passage of this bill.

HOSPITAL SERVICES

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: This is a petition to protect hospital services for the citizens of Strathroy-Caradoc.

"Whereas Strathroy Middlesex General Hospital is facing a budget deficit that has caused cuts to complex continuing care, rehab and palliative care beds, forcing patients to move to long-term-care facilities out of town and not of their choice;

"Whereas the hospital has also been forced to cut physiotherapy and social work, and is facing additional cuts to other needed health care services;

"Whereas our community members have worked, paid our taxes and fundraised since 1914 to build and improve our local hospital and its services, and it is wrong to force people to lose these needed services;

"Whereas our hospitals provide public services and should be democratic, open and accountable;

"Whereas the Ontario government is required to provide reasonable access to necessary hospital services and ran the last election campaign on protecting our public health care, not on removing hospital and health services out of small and rural communities;

"Therefore, be it resolved that the provincial government fund our hospital adequately, stop the cuts, and restore democratic hospital boards with full public access to information about hospital finances and levels of programs and services."

I couldn't agree more, and I give it to Lara to be delivered. I will sign it as well.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Bob Delaney: I have a petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly. I would like very much to thank Kelly LePage of Ashcroft Crescent in Mississauga for having collected the signatures on this petition. It reads as follows:

"Whereas wait times for access to surgical procedures in the western GTA area served by the Mississauga Halton LHIN are growing despite the ongoing capital project activity at the hospitals within the Mississauga Halton LHIN boundaries; and

"Whereas 'day surgery' procedures could better be performed in an off-site facility. An ambulatory surgery centre would greatly increase the ability of surgeons to perform more procedures, reduce wait times for patients and free up operating theatre space in hospitals for more complex procedures that may require post-operative intensive care unit support and a longer length of stay in hospital;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care allocate funds in its 2009-10 capital budget to begin planning and construction of an ambulatory surgery centre located in western Mississauga to serve the Mississauga-Halton area and enable greater access to 'day surgery' procedures that comprise about four fifths of all surgical procedures performed."

I'm pleased to sign and certainly support this petition and to ask page Michael to carry it for me.

CHILD CUSTODY

Mr. Jim Brownell: I have a petition, and I would like to thank Cheryl and Bob Taplay, spokespersons for the Seaway Grands Support Group in Cornwall who have worked hard to get signatures and help in the petition I'm about to read.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"We, the people of Ontario, deserve and have the right to request an amendment to the Children's Law Reform Act to emphasize the importance of children's relationships with their parents and grandparents;

"Whereas subsection 20(2.1) requires parents and others with custody of children to refrain from unreasonably placing obstacles to personal relations between the children and their grandparents; and

"Whereas subsection 24(2) contains a list of matters that a court must consider when determining the best interests of a child. The bill amends that subsection to include a specific reference to the importance of maintaining emotional ties between children and grandparents; and

"Whereas subsection 24(2.1) requires a court that is considering custody of or access to a child to give effect to the principle that a child should have as much contact with each parent and grandparent as is consistent with the best interests of the child; and

"Whereas subsection 24(2.2) requires a court that is considering custody of a child to take into consideration each applicant's willingness to facilitate as much contact between the child and each parent and grandparent as is consistent with the best interests of the child;

"We, the undersigned, hereby petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to amend the Children's Law Reform Act as above to emphasize the importance of children's relationships with their parents and grandparents."

As I agree with this petition, I shall sign it and send it to the clerks' table.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

WORKPLACE SAFETY AND INSURANCE AMENDMENT ACT (FIREFIGHTERS), 2009

LOI DE 2009 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LA SÉCURITÉ PROFESSIONNELLE ET L'ASSURANCE CONTRE LES ACCIDENTS DU TRAVAIL (POMPIERS)

Mr. Arnott moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 169, An Act to amend the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997 with respect to firefighters / Projet de loi 169, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1997 sur la sécurité

professionnelle et l'assurance contre les accidents du travail en ce qui a trait aux pompiers.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Mr. Arnott has moved second reading of Bill 169. Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for his presentation.

Mr. Ted Arnott: I'm very pleased to have this opportunity this afternoon to lead off the debate on my Bill 169, An Act to amend the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997, with respect to firefighters.

I wish to begin my remarks this afternoon by introducing a number of people who I believe are with us here today in the visitors' gallery: Chief Brad Patton and Tom Mulvey of the Centre Wellington township fire service; Jim Richards from the Clearview fire department, representing the Fire Fighters Association of Ontario; Bill Burns from the Paris fire department, representing the FFAO as well; Darren Storey, representing the FFAO; Mark Pankhurst from the Simcoe county fire chiefs council administration group; Lim Richards from Creemore; David Ford from the Halton Hills fire service; Gord Cash from Halton Hills as well; and Armando Cabral from Halton Hills. Welcome today.

When I was just a boy about 10 years old, growing up in the village of Arthur, my hometown, during a nasty January ice storm on a Saturday night our house caught fire. I have a vivid memory of my mother opening the door to our basement and closing it quickly, after she saw the smoke and the fire, and calmly but insistently declaring that we all had to get out fast. We called the Arthur fire department from a neighbour's house, and our local volunteer firemen were on the scene within minutes. While our house was severely damaged on the first floor, and of course the basement, where the fire had originated, the second and third floors suffered only smoke damage, and our house was saved. Our house was saved because our community-minded, resourceful and courageous firefighters, volunteers all, had left their own homes and families on a stormy Saturday night in January to respond to the call.

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Perhaps this is just one of the reasons that I've wanted to respond to their call for my help from time to time in this House. In 1994, I introduced an amendment to the Highway Traffic Act to allow volunteer firefighters to use flashing green lights on their personal vehicles while responding to emergencies. To his credit, Premier Bob Rae supported the bill, and it became one of the few private members' bills to be passed into law.

In 1998, in my second term in office, I introduced legislation that allowed rural municipalities to support their firefighters to the greatest extent possible when it came to workers' compensation coverage. In time, the Minister of Labour of the day, the Honourable Jim Flaherty, introduced an identical bill, and that government bill passed into law, giving municipalities the option to purchase the highest level of workers' compensation coverage possible for their volunteer firefighters, irrespective of their earnings at their full-time jobs.

In 2002, Mr. Speaker, you will recall that at the request of a local fire chief in Wellington county, my friend

Doug Smith, I began to seek a legislative solution to protect two-hatter or double-hatter firefighters. Typically, double-hatters are firefighters who work full-time for a city department but may live in a small town nearby, and on their time off they want to use their skills and talents to protect their neighbours in their hometowns. I continue to maintain that public safety in small-town Ontario is strengthened by the presence of two-hatters on our volunteer fire departments. And like Justice George Adams, I believe that if two-hatters are threatened or forced to quit as volunteers, legal steps should be taken by the government of Ontario to uphold their right and their freedom to serve on their local volunteer fire departments.

But that ground is well-trod, and today there is another issue that volunteer firefighters need us to address: the presumptive legislation, as they call it. What does this mean? In simple terms, it means that if a firefighter gets a certain kind of cancer or, say, has a heart attack after a fire call, it is presumed that the illness arose because of their work as firefighters, and they don't have to prove it. As such, they are eligible for workers' compensation benefits.

You will recall that we passed presumptive legislation for firefighters in May 2007, two years ago this very month. All parties—indeed, all members—gave their consent, and Bill 221 was given first, second and third readings, and passed into law in one day; an outstanding example of all-party co-operation. There was only one problem with Bill 221: It only covered full-time firefighters. Volunteer and part-time firefighters were completely excluded.

The government at the time gave vague assurances that consultations would be undertaken with the volunteer firefighters, including the Firefighters Association of Ontario. We were assured that the consultations would occur and something would be done—and it must be done for our volunteer firefighters and their families, but especially for the surviving family of a Stittsville volunteer firefighter. He served his community for over 25 years as a volunteer firefighter, but in September 2007 he was diagnosed with acute myelogenous leukemia. Tragically, he passed away on January 9, 2008.

There is no doubt in my mind that every single day his family continues to grieve his loss. Their loss is compounded by the knowledge that because he was a volunteer, he was not covered under Bill 221, even though, as his wife wrote to the Minister of Labour earlier this year, "Volunteers face the same hazards and exposures as their full-time career peers," and even though acute myelogenous leukemia is one of the cancers covered under Bill 221 for full-time firefighters.

I want to express my thanks to my colleague Norm Sterling, MPP for Carleton-Mississippi Mills, for bringing this issue to my attention. I know that he is very concerned about this family and wants to see this issue addressed as much as I do. Clearly this House must act and correct this unfairness in Ontario's fire service, for as the volunteers would tell you, a firefighter is a firefighter is a firefighter, and I could not agree more. As Dave

Thomson, president of the Firefighters Association of Ontario, said in a letter to the Minister of Labour last fall, "Career firefighters and volunteer firefighters fight the same fires, respond to the same emergencies, in their jurisdiction to protect their communities, because that is what is expected of them. Volunteers are on call 24/7, where the career work shift periods. This puts the volunteer at "a higher risk, in some cases, to the exposure of the eight already identified types of cancer."

These points are reinforced by the comments of the Ontario fire chiefs' association. In a letter that was sent to the Minister of Labour in June of 2007, the Ontario fire chiefs' association pointed out four main reasons why all classifications of firefighters should be treated equally when it comes to occupational disease. They point out: "Many volunteer firefighters during" the course of "their careers respond to as many or more fires than full-time firefighters due to their availability to respond to all calls, 24/7. In addition, the chemicals used in modern agricultural businesses and the location of industries in rural areas" sometimes "means that rural volunteers also face the potential for significant exposure to carcinogenic substances.

"The second reason for equality is that the province's own legislation, the Fire Protection and Prevention Act, 1997, contains the following definition: "Firefighter" means a fire chief and any other person employed in, or appointed to, a fire department and assigned to undertake fire protection services, and includes a volunteer firefighter."

The third reason they point out is that "34% of all Ontario fire departments are composite fire departments" in that "they are composed of a mixture of full-time and volunteer firefighters. In many of these fire departments the full-time and volunteer firefighters are fighting the same major fires side by side. Given that these firefighters are facing identical risks and that they are working for the same employer," they should not be treated differently when it comes to workers' compensation.

"The fourth point" that they "raise is the fact that many full-time firefighters actually started their careers as volunteer firefighters. Their years of exposure start from the beginning of their career as a firefighter, and applying the same regulations will make it" much "easier to recognize this situation."

Of course I should point out that the Ontario Association of Fire Chiefs represents fire chiefs from all across the province, including big-city fire departments as well as small-town departments that tend to be staffed by volunteers. So they speak to this issue, I think, in a way that encompasses all the issues in the fire service, and I think we should certainly listen to what they have to say on this matter.

I wish to also inform the House that the need for bringing in presumptive legislation to support the volunteer fire service has been supported by a significant number of municipalities in the province of Ontario. I'd like to list some of them for you.

The city of Ottawa passed two resolutions in November of 2008. The corporation of the township of

Otonabee-South Monaghan passed a resolution in March of 2009. The corporation of the united townships of Head, Clara and Maria passed a resolution in April this year. The township of Asphodel-Norwood passed a resolution in April of this year; the township of Wilmot, in April of this year of well; the corporation of the town of Tecumseh recently, in April; the township of Ryerson, the municipality of Northern Bruce Peninsula, the township of East Zorra-Tavistock, the corporation of the municipality of Leamington, the township of Sioux Narrows-Nestor Falls, the town of Kirkland Lake, the corporation of the township of Morley, and the township of Pickle Lake have all passed resolutions, actually in the last few weeks, to draw attention to this issue and to urge the Minister of Labour to get moving on this commitment that the government made two years ago after the passage of Bill 221, to ensure that steps were taken to allow volunteer firefighters to have the same coverage of presumptive legislation.

Recently, in my riding of Wellington-Halton Hills, I received word from two municipalities which have also passed similar resolutions: the township of Puslinch, in the southern part of Wellington county, as well as the township of Centre Wellington.

So I think it's fair to say that a significant number of municipal councils across the province, including some cities as well as small towns, are trying to put forward their best efforts to get the government moving on this.

I said in jest, when I introduced the bill, that what we're trying to do by introducing Bill 169 is to light a fire under the Minister of Labour. I would say to him, in the spirit of co-operation, that I would hope he will do what he can to bring this issue forward and take action. I certainly hope that by bringing this bill forward, it enhances the level of awareness in this House of the issue. I would ask all members to give consideration to the points I've made and the points that are being made by fire services across the province of Ontario. I look forward to the debate, but I would certainly hope that we will have support from all sides of the House and we can see passage of this bill this afternoon.

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The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): I, too, would like to welcome the firefighters to Queen's Park today, in particular the firefighters who are here from my riding in Clearview township.

Further debate?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It's a pleasure and a privilege to rise to speak on behalf of this bill. Certainly, we in the New Democratic Party support this bill wholeheartedly. This is a no-brainer, really. This is something the government promised to do two years ago and hasn't done.

In fact, Bill 111, which our leader, Andrea Horwath, brought forward quite a while ago, in which presumptive legislation was first outlined—that is, protection for front-line workers, particularly firefighters, when they run into a fire or a place that's dangerous, that certain cancers and diseases should be attributed to their work duties and to their workplace—we were supportive of that too.

One of the sadder days in the House, actually, one of the most partisan days in this House, was when the government brought forward their own legislation, Bill 221, without even a thank you to Ms. Horwath, who originated that legislation. Usually, in the spirit of camaraderie and generosity, the government will at least acknowledge if somebody else brings forward the bill that they copy. In school it's called plagiarism, but here it's called government. They sometimes thank the person. This wasn't the case there. It was a profoundly sad and joyous day at the same time, that her bill was finally made law yet she was not acknowledged for her hard work.

However, having said that, the differences between Bill 111 and Bill 221 are exactly what the member from Wellington-Halton Hills is trying to correct today. In Bill 111, Ms. Horwath had the stipulation that all firefighters, whether they're paid or volunteer, should be covered. I mean, please. For those who are watching this at home, where is the logic in covering only those who are paid for their work and not those who do the same valuable, life-saving work but aren't paid for it? This makes no sense. Yet the government's stalling; the government hasn't acted. It takes a private member from the opposition party, a private member's bill, which we all know doesn't have a great chance of success, to bring the issue forward just to get some action on the government side, for something that's so clearly obvious and clearly necessary. So kudos to the member from Wellington-Halton Hills for doing the necessary, but shame on the government for not doing this in the first place.

Hopefully this bill rectifies it; hopefully all the members support it. But I have to say to those watching that just because all members support it, it does not mean it's going to have a life as a bill, because we all know there are many ways of killing a good effort in this place, killing a good private member's bill. One is by voting it down here. The other is by voting it through here and then killing it at committee. So our hope is that this bill is not killed here, but supported through to committee and then actually supported.

There's another, new way of killing a bill that we discovered recently, which is to get it through committee and then not give it royal assent. So our plea, really, from the New Democratic Party to the government is to do the right thing. Don't just pay this lip service: Bring it in yourselves, pass it and give kudos to the member where kudos are due for doing what should be done. Let's get on with the reality of protecting those who protect us. That's what we're talking about here: protecting those who protect us.

I know in my former life as a minister with the United Church that if we were ever in difficulty—we ran a drop-in dinner program for those who had addiction and mental health issues, so we were sometimes dealing with people who were a risk to themselves and others. If we ever felt the need for support from our public servants, we would dial 911. Guess who always arrived there first? It was the firefighters, always. Whether it was a police matter or a paramedic matter, it was the firefighters. It

was just enough, usually, that the firefighters came to the door that the situation was resolved. I know how efficient and effective they are. I have had a number of firefighters in my congregation and I have a number of firefighters in my constituency. They are always the ones to call and they are always the ones who arrive first.

The question is, if you are in one of those municipalities where they're not paid, should we protect them or not? That's really the question being put forward here today, and the answer is very simple. There's one answer: Absolutely. Of course. No-brainer.

If we don't think this happens to affect people's lives, by the way, there are a couple of examples here that are very telling because it does affect real people's lives. The fact that this was not in Bill 221 and the fact that it's still not in the legislation really causes people grief.

We have a couple of examples. Gene Morand, a 40-year veteran of the Tecumseh fire department, passed away more than two years ago from kidney cancer caused by exposure to toxins on the job. Morand's WSIB compensation claim has never been settled, according to his widow, Mary Ellen, and son, Larry. Windsor firefighter Doug Diet has been trying to help the family expedite Morand's WSIB claim, but because this government has been dragging its heels on including comprehensive WSIB coverage for all firefighters, this family has found no relief.

How is it that a man who spends 40 years fighting fires for the Tecumseh fire department and succumbs to a fatal occupational disease is not covered? This is outrageous. This situation continues.

I remember my first settlement charge when I was out in Huron-Bruce county, and we had volunteer firefighters, amazing men—they were all men at that point—who volunteered their time. We did fundraising for them as a church and as a community just to help pay to get the job done. I can't imagine, if one of those were to end up the way Gene did and his family, that this legislation would not cover them. This is so patently unfair. It's silly. It makes no sense. So we have to wonder, what is the government thinking here?

Certainly, we lag behind other legislation, and I'm going to give some examples. Manitoba, Alberta, Saskatchewan, British Columbia and Nova Scotia all have better legislation around this issue than we do; all don't have to go through what Morand's family had to go through in battling WSIB at the worst possible time. Imagine: You've lost your loved one. He succumbed to a disease that he contracted on the job saving lives, and then, not only do you have to deal with that—the grief, the funeral, making ends meet—but you also have to fight with bureaucrats at WSIB to somehow get some recompense for what happened. This is a terrible, terrible burden that this government is placing on the shoulders of bereaved families.

Thank goodness that the member from Wellington-Halton Hills came forward with this. Certainly, it's needed, and it's needed only because the government hasn't done what it should do with its own legislation.

Ontario's heroic firefighters deserve far greater than this. They absolutely do. The fact that volunteers are not covered by the same legislation that covers those who are paid for their work is, to most people watching this program and listening to this, absolutely outrageous.

To close, I would just appeal to the government: Please, pass this on second reading. But don't stop there, because we know that that's simply another way of sloughing it off on some days. We want to see it go to committee. We want to see it get through committee. Even better yet—because, let's face it, it's not going to come to pass in the House unless the government brings it in—bring it in. Bring in an amendment to your own legislation that will cover volunteer firefighters and when you do, please, in the spirit of generosity and camaraderie, get out of the partisan House we all live in and give thanks to the member from Wellington–Halton Hills for actually pointing out where your own legislation was remiss. Give thanks to him.

1400

Pass the bill here today. Pass it through committee. Bring it in if you have to, and please, finally give kudos where kudos are due, to the person who really caught the loophole in your own legislation, closed the loophole, and finally, at the end of the day, because this isn't just about paper here; it actually looks after the lives of those who look after our lives.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Khalil Ramal: First, I want to thank all the firefighters who are with us here in the gallery. I recognize their work and their efforts, especially in the countryside and rural areas and in the small communities where I know, for sure, many, many fire halls cannot be operated and cannot exist without those volunteers who work and the firefighters in those small towns. I get the chance to speak with them on many different occasions, especially when I travel with our ministry to celebrate volunteer awards. We see a lot of firefighters, volunteers, get awards for their dedication and for their service to their communities.

I think the member from Wellington–Halton Hills raised a very important issue, but I want to tell the members and the firefighters that it's important to us because we recognize the efforts and the hazards that firefighters face on a regular basis. Also, everybody remembers in this House that on May 4, 2007, we allowed presumptive legislation to pass for the firefighters across the province of Ontario. I think it got a lot of support from both sides of the House, and it's important legislation because that one was a recognition of the efforts and of the work of the firefighters in this beautiful province of Ontario.

I talked to AMO, I talked to many different stakeholders and to the Minister of Labour about this issue several times. He said to me, and he said publicly to the firefighters in one of his speeches, "With respect to presumptive legislation, I know that an expansion to cover volunteer and part-time firefighters and fire investigators is on the mind of every firefighter and volunteer in the

whole province of Ontario. So I want to assure you that the issue of looking at the expansion of the presumption to volunteer and part-time firefighters and fire investigators is an active file in my ministry."

Also, he's talking about WSIB and about many different issues—to study it very well, to expand the presumptive legislation to include the firefighters, the volunteers and also the part-timers and the investigators, who work very hard in the province of Ontario to make sure our communities are safe, also that their families are well respected, and also to relieve people from anxiety about maybe contracting a disease or maybe dying on the job for the things they love and for the things they believe strongly in: their duty and obligation to support and help the province of Ontario, things I believe strongly, too. As elected officials, it is our obligation and duty to protect you and make sure that you live in a safe environment, and also that your family has peace of mind if something happens to you.

Mr. Speaker, thank you again for allowing me to speak. That's why, to the honourable member from Wellington–Halton Hills, it's unnecessary to support your bill, because the minister is working on it and hopefully does not need a bill. That's an important issue. We don't have to have a bill because the minister is working on expanding to include all the firefighters, whether volunteers or part-timers or the investigators. So that's why, if I don't support your bill, it doesn't mean I'm not supporting firefighters; I'm supporting expansion.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I, too, want to welcome the firefighters that we have with us today to be part of this debate, and I want to congratulate the member from Wellington–Halton Hills for bringing forward this important bill to support our volunteer firefighters.

The member from Wellington–Halton Hills has been a champion for firefighters for many years. In 1994, he introduced legislation to allow volunteer firefighters to use flashing green lights in their personal vehicles while responding to emergencies. That bill was passed into law. I went to many a fire with the green light flashing in my windshield, and I want to thank him for that.

In 1998, he introduced Bill 75, the Emergency Volunteers Protection Act, to ensure that municipalities could support their firefighters to the greatest possible extent with workers' compensation, which meant that they could buy compensation so if someone, in their part-time activity, was going to get hurt, they would get paid at the highest level that compensation could pay out. I too was protected with that for a number of years as a volunteer.

He introduced legislation to support the two-hatter firefighters and had been a supporter of professional firefighters who also chose to volunteer in their local department and help in their own local community.

As the member of Wellington–Halton Hills mentioned in his remarks two years ago, this Legislature unanimously passed Bill 221, The Workplace Safety and Insurance Amendment Act (Presumptions for Firefighters),

2007. That legislation, as was mentioned, ensured that firefighters who became ill received the workers' compensation benefits that they were entitled to. Previously, firefighters had to prove their illness or injury was job-related; now it's up to the WSIB to prove that it isn't.

Bill 169, introduced by my colleague from Wellington-Halton Hills, would extend that same coverage to volunteer firefighters, and I'm very pleased to say that I will be supporting this bill—not "if" I'm supporting this bill; I will be supporting this bill—because I believe that volunteer firefighters deserve that protection.

Two years ago, when Bill 221 was introduced, my colleague the member from Simcoe-Grey—the member now sitting in the chair—asked for unanimous consent to immediately move second and third reading on the bill, because we all believed it was the right thing to do. One day and the firefighters had the protection they needed: May 3, 2007, the bill got first, second and third reading; May 4, 2007, the bill received royal assent. That may very well be a record in this place.

I want to commend the member from Hamilton Centre, who originally introduced that bill as a private member's bill in 2006, and it was mentioned by my colleague. It is due to her hard work and dedication that professional firefighters have that protection today.

Unfortunately, volunteer firefighters do not have that same support if they become ill. When the government introduced Bill 221, it should have covered all firefighters. The bill we are debating today shouldn't have been necessary.

The risk to firefighters of being injured on call or exposed to a chemical that is going to cause long-term health problems is the same, regardless of who you are working for or how much you are being paid for the job. As a former volunteer firefighter, I know that when you go on the fire call, you don't always know what type of situation you're going to be walking into. You don't know what plastics are in the home or what gases will be produced when the furniture burns. For industrial or commercial buildings, the risk of hazardous chemicals and gases can be even higher. You don't have the time or ability to analyze what might be in the building. Professional or volunteer, firefighters have the same job to do and they face the same risk.

Firefighters wear breathing apparatus to protect them, but there is still always the risk. A firefighter may not even know that the apparatus has failed and that they have been exposed to hazardous chemicals. It is difficult to know exactly what firefighters have been exposed to and to prove the long-term effects on their health, but we know there is a relationship. We also know that when a firefighter or former firefighter gets sick, it's the worst time to put them and their families through the bureaucratic struggle to get the support that they deserve. This bill would ensure that firefighters who develop certain types of illness like cancers and heart disease would be able to collect workers' compensation benefits without fighting through the red tape.

Volunteer firefighters put their health and their lives on the line the same way a full-time firefighter does.

They are giving to their community, and they deserve their community's support. Our rural communities and small towns depend on volunteer firefighters to protect our families and our homes. In small towns, we just simply can't afford to have a full-time fire department, and so we rely on people who believe in giving back to their community and doing their part. These people give of their time and themselves, and they should not have to suffer because of it.

I hope that all members in this House will support this bill and that the government will take steps to move forward quickly to ensure that all our firefighters have the support they deserve.

Again, I want to congratulate the member from Wellington-Halton Hills for bringing this important bill forward and thank him for his continuous support for the firefighters.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mrs. Linda Jeffrey: I'm pleased to join the debate and indicate my support for the bill. I believe our government recognizes the hazardous, life-threatening work that our firefighters do, and volunteer firefighters are particularly important for smaller communities across Ontario.

Since I've been here, I believe we've taken two really important steps to ensure that firefighters and their families are treated with dignity and compassion, the first one being, as was spoken about earlier, the presumptive legislation having been passed in 2007. I would be remiss if I didn't mention residential fire sprinklers, something that was brought through in June 2008, when we changed the building code to require residential sprinklers in condominiums and new apartments higher than three storeys. Ultimately, I'd like to see them in three storeys and lower, but that's another day's task for me. I believe that, ultimately, if you make a safer work environment, it's going to protect Ontarians and firefighters. That's what I'd like to see.

1410

I know that the Ministry of Labour has been consulting with fire sector professionals on how to include volunteer and part-time firefighters in the new legislation that they're working on. I know they consult with fire sector stakeholders who talk about fire and life safety issues, and I know that they play an invaluable role in advising those committees. But I believe it's important and our responsibility as government to create a safer work environment for all firefighters and all Ontarians in this province. I don't believe fire safety should be a partisan issue. For that reason, I will be supporting the member from Wellington-Halton Hills and Bill 169.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Robert Bailey: It's a pleasure for me to speak in favour of the bill from my colleague, the member for Wellington-Halton Hills. This member has served in this Legislature for almost 19 years, and I've admired his commitment to his rural communities and his understanding of how rural municipal governments work. In

particular, the member for Wellington–Halton Hills has long been a champion of volunteer firefighters and understands how important volunteer firefighters are for our rural communities.

As I said, volunteer firefighters are important to many of our rural communities. Communities that can't afford to have a full-time firefighting force rely on volunteer forces, and we have to make sure that we take care of those. They courageously protect our communities, and this legislation will increase their protection.

This bill, if passed by the Legislature, will give volunteer firefighters the exact same protections that full-time firefighters have. Two years ago, this Legislature passed Bill 221, which improved compensation coverage for firefighters who develop certain illnesses like cancer or heart disease. The point of Bill 221 made it possible to presume that those diseases were work-related; as such, it allowed firefighters who developed these awful diseases to collect workplace compensation claims.

As the Minister of Labour said when he introduced Bill 221, "Firefighters protect us. In turn, we must protect them." There was no distinction made between full-time firefighters and volunteer firefighters. What the member from Wellington–Halton Hills' bill does is extend that same protection to volunteer firefighters. I think it is time that we correct this mistake, and I applaud the member from Wellington–Halton Hills for taking this initiative.

In Ontario, we have a proud tradition of all three parties supporting and promoting safe and healthy workplaces. We may differ from time to time on how we make our workplaces safe, but we all understand and take seriously our responsibility to protect Ontario workers. I see this bill as taking an important step in offering protection to workers who, every day, take risks for their communities. This won't make it any safer to be a firefighter, but it will allow volunteer firefighters who develop a workplace illness to collect workers' compensation benefits for themselves and their families. This bill would allow volunteer firefighters to be treated fairly and with respect when they do contract an occupational illness. These are personal tragedies, but I believe we have a responsibility to ensure they get the support that they deserve.

Many of us in this Legislature, myself included, have in the past been volunteer firefighters in another life. A few years ago, I was proud to be a member of the Oil Springs volunteer firefighters. I know at first hand how important their job is and how they do it only out of a desire to help the community and their friends and families. You can possibly get called out at all hours and you have to deal with all kinds of terrible situations that require a great deal of training. Volunteer firefighters make our rural communities safer.

As the member for Wellington–Halton Hills said, he has received many letters from different municipalities supporting this. Volunteer firefighters have long been proud to have Mr. Arnott as a strong advocate on their behalf. Volunteer firefighters have already waited two years, and two years is too long for the same full-time coverage that firefighters have.

I would like to just sum up some of the attributes of the member from Wellington–Halton Hills in the past. In 1994, he introduced legislation to allow volunteer firefighters to use the flashing green lights in their personal vehicles while responding to emergencies. That bill was passed into law. In 1998, he introduced legislation to ensure municipalities could support their volunteer firefighters to the greatest possible extent. Following his lead, the government later passed an identical law into legislation. In 2002, he introduced legislation to support the two-hatter firefighters. Typically, two-hatter firefighters work full-time for city departments and also may wish to volunteer in nearby small municipalities, where they may happen to live. He continues to stand up for the two-hatters' right to volunteer.

Volunteer firefighters need and deserve to see this legislation passed. To quote Mr. Arnott, "They protect our communities courageously and they keep us safe, often at great risk to their own health." If passed into law, Mr. Arnott's bill would cover volunteer firefighters with the same presumptive workers' compensation coverage that full-time firefighters rely upon.

As I said, in my past life, I was also fortunate to sit as a member of municipal council on the Enniskillen-Petrolia fire management board, which had many decisions to make for our rural fire department. It gave me a deep appreciation of the financial resources and training that volunteer firefighters and departments need and require.

In our rural communities, we just don't have the tax base to support full-time forces like the larger urban areas. When you have a limited number of taxpayers, the only option is a volunteer force. Even with volunteer forces, they don't come free. Your call volume changes from year to year and you have to be able to respond. Rural municipalities recognize that and accept that when they go the volunteer route.

I would like to close on that and say again that I, as a number of our members on this side of the House, intend to support this. I would encourage the rest of the House to also support it is when the time comes for a vote.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Dave Levac: I appreciate the opportunity to speak to Bill 169, An Act to amend the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997 with respect to firefighters, as submitted by Mr. Arnott as a private member's bill, giving first reading April 21, 2009. I have a copy of the bill in my hand.

I do want to bring some clarity and comments to the table that basically speak to some of the assumptions that were made. The previous, first presumptive legislation, as a private member's bill that was introduced, as was referenced by the member from the NDP, if it was passed, would have required legislative reachback into 1918, making sure that all members would have had their coverage from 1918 and their subsequent relatives all the way through. That was pointed out and clarified in the government's bill. The complexities of the workplace don't apply to the firefighting; the complexities of the

workplace apply to the volunteer's place of work. We do know most of the firefighters have other jobs that they are performing tasks for. Quite frankly, that's a complexity that needs to be taken into consideration.

Do I support presumptive legislation for volunteers? Absolutely. As a matter of fact, I've been on the record indicating that I support presumptive legislation for volunteers and for part-timers. When the Minister of Labour at that time, now Speaker, indicated that the discussions would be ongoing, the member who's proposing the bill indicated that we gave vague assurances. I beg to differ that the "vague assurances" implied or impugns the intent of the government not to proceed with the legislation.

He also indicated to us that he was happy to introduce the bill, and I understand why he's done so: to put a fire under the feet of the government. In terms of legislation itself, it's another way of reminding the government that we've made the commitment to do presumptive legislation. The Minister of Labour attended the Fire Chiefs Association annual general meeting and made the same commitment again, that we're working on it. I'm told that there are ongoing discussions trying to work out how, when, what—the complexities. That's going on.

I thank the member for bringing that to our attention and I will suggest to him that the time on task is one of the issues that was discussed and will continue to be dialogued. There's a dialogue with the Minister of Labour and the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services going on. I myself attended the chiefs' meeting and made the commitment that I believe those firefighters deserve presumptive legislation. So I'm going to tell you right off the bat that I believe we're headed in the right direction, and I thank the member for his work.

1420

I would never demean any member's work in this House or in their constituency as anything other than stellar. The day has to pass where we use our verbal attacks to say that somebody is not doing anything. Quite frankly, I admire the member's work on behalf of his constituency but also in the particular area of firefighters, where he's landed. I think he, too, knows that I have done so myself. I will say to you, standing in my place, that I am 100% in favour of presumptive legislation for part-time firefighters and anyone else who puts themselves in the line of duty, where they could get a presumed cancer as a result of the work that they do.

So I want to thank the member for his work and make the commitment to support it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: I think there are a few seconds left on the clock—yes, there are.

I would just like to support the member's bill. Quite frankly, I can't imagine walking into a burning house that has fumes in it, where we know not what they are. Those can cause immediate problems, they can cause intermediate problems, and they can cause long-term problems. We have people in our society and in our communities

who volunteer for this kind of work, and I think that the very least that we can do as a society, as a government within a province, is to protect those people and make sure that they and their loved ones are protected from the services they give us over time. So I'm pleased to support this bill, and I look forward to its passage.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Vic Dhillon: I'm glad to have the opportunity to stand today in the House and join the debate on the member for Wellington-Halton Hills' private member's Bill 169, An Act to amend the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997 with respect to firefighters.

Our government recognizes the hazardous, life-threatening work that firefighters do. This is definitely not an easy job. These men and women risk their lives to make sure that every citizen in this province remains safe. We have taken steps to ensure that firefighters and their families are treated with dignity and compassion.

Volunteer firefighters are crucial for fire services in many of Ontario's smaller communities. As the member may recall, legislation was passed on May 4, 2007, to allow presumptive legislation for firefighters under the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act by regulation. At the time, it was announced that consultations would occur with fire sector stakeholders to determine how legislation would apply to volunteer and part-time firefighters. Ministry officials have been meeting with fire sector stakeholders to discuss the situation. There have been good discussions about expanding the legislation beyond full-time firefighters. I have also had the opportunity to speak with several stakeholders about this matter.

With respect to the presumptive legislation, I know that an expansion to cover volunteer and part-time firefighters and fire investigators is on many people's minds. This is evident based on the letters the Ministry of Labour receives from firefighters and municipal councils. I want to assure you that the issue of looking at the expansion of the presumption to volunteer and part-time firefighters and fire investigators is an active file within the ministry. The Ministry of Labour has consulted with fire sector stakeholders regarding how to include volunteer and part-time firefighters and fire investigators in the presumptive legislation by regulation.

This private member's bill is unnecessary legislation. Once the government has determined how the volunteer and part-time firefighters and fire investigators are to be covered by the presumption for occupational disease and heart injury, a regulation can be brought forward. I—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Thank you. Sorry, the member's time has expired.

The honourable member for Wellington-Halton Hills, Mr. Arnott, you have up to two minutes for your response.

Mr. Ted Arnott: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for giving me the chance to respond to some of the comments that have been made this afternoon with respect to Bill 169.

I certainly wish to express my thanks to the member for Parkdale–High Park for her comments and her support of the bill.

I want to thank my colleague the member for London–Fanshawe, who said that the minister supports the principle of what I’m advocating, and I’m appreciative of that. Although he didn’t definitively say he was going to support it, I hope he still will.

The member for Oxford, who served as a volunteer firefighter in his own community for a long time before he was elected here, was thorough and thoughtful as always. I appreciate his support.

I want to thank the member for Brampton–Springdale for her expression of support on Bill 169 today and commend her as well for her work in terms of supporting the fire service with her sprinkler bill.

The member for Sarnia–Lambton, who was also a volunteer firefighter before being elected at the Legislature, and also a municipal councillor, understands this issue well from a lot of different angles, as well as being a very effective critic for the Minister of Labour. I was pleased to hear his contribution.

I want to thank the member for Brant for his support as well. You have the principle of the bill, and I really do appreciate that.

To speak to the member for Brampton West, who is the Minister of Labour’s parliamentary assistant, as I understand it, he said that there is an active file in the minister’s office with respect to this issue. I would hope so, because there is a commitment on the part of the government to deal with this matter. Certainly I would have thought that the minister’s parliamentary assistant would want to express support in principle for this legislation. He said at the end that it’s unnecessary, but I would argue that it is necessary to bring this issue to the floor of the Legislature, have this discussion and encourage the government to get moving on it.

Once again, I want to express my appreciation to our firefighters who are here today for their indications of interest and support, and again publicly thank them for everything they do to keep us safe and protect us, often at risk to themselves. We do appreciate their presence here today and the good work that they do to keep our communities safe.

Thank you again, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate your indulgence.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Thank you. Just for the viewers at home and our guests in the galleries today, we will vote on Mr. Arnott’s bill in about 100 minutes’ time.

PENSION BENEFITS AMENDMENT ACT
(UNLOCKING PENSION FUNDS), 2009

LOI DE 2009 MODIFIANT LA LOI
SUR LES RÉGIMES DE RETRAITE
(DÉBLOCAGE DES FONDS DE RETRAITE)

Mr. Chudleigh moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 116, An Act to amend the Pension Benefits Act to allow transfers of locked-in pension funds to registered retirement income funds / *Projet de loi 116, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les régimes de retraite pour permettre le transfert de fonds de retraite immobilisés à des fonds enregistrés de revenu de retraite.*

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Pursuant to standing order 98, Mr. Chudleigh, you have up to 12 minutes for your presentation.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I’m pleased to rise in the Legislature today to introduce this bill. I think it’s a bill that’s long overdue.

Bill 116 aims primarily to give seniors and all retirees the independence that they deserve. For too long, the government has controlled the hard-earned pension monies of Ontarians, rationing out pension income like parents giving allowance to their children. During these trying economic times, seniors need financial flexibility, not financial shackles. In the inflationary cycle which most economists would agree is coming down the road, in particular, we will need flexibility in handling our investments. That flexibility will not be there in locked-in retirement accounts.

Considering that retirees have generally shown fiscal wisdom and prudence throughout their lives, through the sound management of their accounts and investments, as owners of homes and automobiles, as parents and grandparents, through community involvement and as valued employees and employers, it is just not right that they are treated with such disrespect in their golden years. It is time we start treating seniors like adults.

Secondly, Bill 116 aims to provide a financial stimulus to our reeling economy. An immediate unlocking of pension funds could put significant money in the hands of thousands of consumers. This is not a bailout or a grant; the money already exists. It exists as deferred salary and would not cost taxpayers anything.

Finally, Bill 116 aims to level the playing field for all Ontarians by giving everyone the same access to their own money. As it stands, there are exemptions for certain individuals from these inhibitive and insulting rules. As well, there is an unfair situation across Canada as citizens of Saskatchewan enjoy greater freedom than those in Ontario, for instance.

Unlocking pensions means respect for seniors, a boost for the economy and a step towards fairness for Ontario and all its citizens. It is an optimistic idea that places faith in the individual above the heavy hand of government. In that sense, Bill 116 is about freedom, plain and simple.

1430

The history of locked-in pensions is an interesting one. Beginning in the mid-1980s, Ontario began to reform pension law so that Ontarians who terminated their employment before the age of retirement were able to have increased control over their accrued pension benefits. Before then, benefits remained in particular pension plans until the age of retirement, so a retiree could have several pension plans. It made more sense to have them

under one roof, when you consider the fact that most Ontarians will have several jobs over the course of their career.

The current system, which places accrued benefits in locked-in retirement accounts as a sort of pension RRSP, makes sense for people who want to manage their money centrally while saving tax-free for the future. However, when locked-in retirement account holders are forced at retirement to transfer funds into LIFs, LRIFs or life annuities, they should have the freedom to cash in some or all of their locked-in retirement accounts.

Currently, new locked-in life income fund holders can access 50% of their assets, but must leave the rest in a locked-in account. The 50% regulation is recent, implemented as part of the Liberal government's budget in 2009. In 2006, the leader of the NDP introduced Bill 175, which would have allowed for 100% withdrawal at the age of 55. However, the bill never reached second reading.

During the 2007 election campaign, PC leader John Tory pledged to unlock pensions. His plan was to allow a 50% withdrawal at the age of 55 and the remaining amount—a 50% withdrawal—at age 65.

In their 2008 budget, the federal government amended the law surrounding federally regulated locked-in pensions, allowing for access of up to 25% before the most recent change in the last budget that increased that 25% and took it up to 50%. So if your pension is regulated federally, you get to withdraw 50% of that on retirement or at age 65.

In October 2008, I introduced Bill 116, which would allow for a 100% withdrawal at retirement or, at the earliest, age 55, and now here we are.

During this time of economic turmoil, the timing couldn't be better for this bill. Money in locked-in pensions is dwindling with the markets, and people are frightened that their savings are continuing to evaporate. There are anywhere from 500,000 to two million people in Ontario who are unable to access their locked-in pension accounts in some form. StatsCanada does not release these figures and neither do banks, which hold many of those accounts, and the tremendous variation of half a million to two million is an estimate based on some of the experience we've had in other provinces that have unlocked these, particularly Saskatchewan.

The accrued benefits within those accounts would total hundreds of millions of dollars. According to Professor Jack Mintz, an estimated one million Canadians have life income funds. One province allows more access to locked-in retirement than Ontario, that being Saskatchewan. In Saskatchewan, you can withdraw 100% of the locked-in retirement funds and put it into a self-managed account—withdraw the money totally. You're totally open and flexible as to what you can do. Alberta and Manitoba allow you to withdraw 50%.

Currently, Ontarians may not receive the sum of their locked-in pensions until age 90. The average lifespan of a Canadian living in Ontario is just under 80, so not many people are going to see their locked-in pensions under the current rules and regulations.

Ontarians may be partially exempt from locked-in rules if they are experiencing significant financial hardship or are diagnosed with a terminal illness. Yet in a three-year period, approximately 30,000 applications for various or partial withdrawals on the grounds of financial hardship were made and only 52 of those were denied. So, basically, of the 30,000 applications only 52 were denied; it seems to me that that is, in practical terms, the unlocking of these pensions. I wonder why instead of putting people through the hoops, the red tape and the experience of a nanny state looking after other people's money for them, the government wouldn't support this which is sensibly in their best interests. There are also expenses involved: \$50 to \$100 for the application process, all of which could be done away with with 100% unlocking of these pension plans.

Seniors who are 65 and over currently represent about 13% of the population of Ontario, or about 1.7 million people. The Ministry of Finance predicts that by 2031 that number will reach 22%, or 3.6 million people. Those numbers, in the next 20 years, are going to just about double. So the amount of money that is going to be locked in in these accounts will escalate greatly in the next few years.

Unlocking pensions would cost the Ontario taxpayer zero dollars. This is not government money, this is money that belongs to the pensioners, this is money that is part of a deferred income. This money was put into a locked-in retirement account by the employer or by the employee over the course of their working life and for that reason this is deferred income. It was earned by these individuals, it was earned by these retirees, and they should have access to the money that they have earned through the sweat of their brow.

There is only one argument against unlocking pensions: that retiree will blow all the money at once, become poorer and live off the public dime. There is no evidence to suggest that this has been the case. There is no evidence in Saskatchewan. There has not been one case that has been brought to my attention anywhere in Canada where these pensions have been unlocked for individuals under various circumstances where that money has been foolishly spent. In the exuberance of youth, perhaps when you're 35 or 40 years old, you might imagine that a senior might blow all their money somewhere; they might take it to the casino and blow it. But I can tell you by the time you get to 55 or 60 and you're starting to seriously plan for your retirement, you understand how valuable those funds are and how carefully you have to manage them in order to preserve them for the future. As I pointed out before, the seniors have the ability to do that.

The trend in the private sector is clearly springing away from defined benefit plans and towards defined contribution plans. The DC plans carry risks that the DB plans do not and are not guaranteed for life. Defined contribution plan members must transfer pension benefits into a locked-in retirement account when terminating their employment.

In conclusion, I know that there is support for Bill 116 in this House, from many members on all sides of this House. I imagine that the government side may have been told not to support this legislation because they have legislation in front of the House that allows for 50% unlocking. They're probably suggesting that that 50% is an adequate level. To those members I say this: To give our seniors only half of their rights as individuals is not fair, to allow our seniors only half of their own money is not right and to treat our seniors like half children and half adults is still insulting and unwarranted.

I ask all members of the House to think about this in their own retirement, the seniors they know and respect, and to ask themselves this: Do I trust Ontario seniors? Do I believe in their wisdom? Do I respect their rights and their self-determination? If your answer is yes, then please support my bill, Bill 116, and vote yes on this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

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Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Let me start by telling a story. When my daughter and I were down in Florida, we had a cab from our hotel to the airport when we were coming back the last time. The cab driver looked to be a gentleman at least in his 80s. Just to make conversation, I said, "You look like you should be on the beach, not driving a cab," and he launched into this story. The story was a common one, certainly across the States and certainly now across Canada as well—more so in the States because of their lack of a social security net. He said that he used to have a small business. He said that in the current economic downturn, the small business went bust. He said that because he doesn't have any retirement funds and he doesn't have any pension plan, he either drives or he doesn't eat. And he was, in fact, in his mid-80s.

We, my friends, are sitting on a powder keg in Canada and in Ontario. Sixty-five per cent of Ontarians don't have any kind of pension other than the Canada pension plan. Thank goodness we have the Canada pension plan. That will at least keep us in poverty. It won't actually pay the rent and feed us. It will maybe do one or the other, and then we can use food banks. Sixty-five per cent of Ontarians—this is a huge issue, and it's going to get worse. We're all of that certain age, and I know that we in this chamber don't have a pension plan either. Most of us are on the freedom 95 plan, as I call it. We're going to be here until we're 95 because we can't afford to quit. That's the reality.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: If we get re-elected.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: If we get re-elected; exactly. This is not unknown to even the people in this House. But let me say that this is not true of all Ontarians; this is just true of the majority of Ontarians. There are those few extremely lucky Ontarians, and I'm thinking of people like Tom Parkinson, the public servant who retired on the public dime with almost \$5 million in his back pocket. Our leader, Andrea Horwath, has brought forward a bill to cap public servants' salaries at \$500,000. Hey, talk

about a no-brainer. Your tax dollars are going to pay bureaucrats over \$500,000 who then get to walk away with millions in their pockets instead of paying for a pension plan for everyone else. That's what we're talking about in the New Democratic Party. We think it's absolutely unconscionable that we're looking at this ticking time bomb of people coming up to retirement, unable to work anymore and destined, let's face it, for complete and utter abject poverty, because that's what's going to happen to the majority of Ontarians unless this government does something.

The government wants Ottawa to do something. This is the standard response from this government. This government blames Ottawa. Quite frankly, one of the better-run pension plans has been the CPP. So there's a conversation to be had, but it doesn't absolve this government from doing what they need to do and what other provinces have done, and that is to bring in some pre-emptive legislation to protect our seniors.

They have done something historic. What they've done today, in fact, in finance committee is government members rejected a proposed NDP amendment that would have ensured that the government back up the province's pension benefits guarantee fund. What does this do? This guarantees that when you work all your life at GM, Chrysler, Nortel or AbitibiBowater, to mention just a few, and you pay into a pension plan, even if the company goes belly up—which, let's face it, is not unheard of these days—the government will step in and guarantee your pension plan, at least to \$1,000 a month. This is where I may disagree a little bit with my friend from Halton because we think it's the government's responsibility to step up to the plate here. We think it's their responsibility to look after those workers who have worked sometimes 30 years, paying into a pension plan, and if their company goes belly up, the government should be there—it used to be there; it should be there—to at least guarantee \$1,000 a month. This is not a great deal of money. This is not even guaranteeing all that they perhaps did put in and are entitled to. This is just \$1,000. We in the NDP think that it should go up to \$2,500 eventually. That's what we believe.

Really, there's no excuse for inaction on this file. This file is going to affect us all. Quite frankly, I don't even get the economy behind this, because if the government isn't paying out in some kind of decent pension plan, the government is going to be paying out in welfare or food banks or shelters or health care or some other way, because we're also talking about people who are going to lose benefits. They're going to lose benefits as well when they retire. This is a false economy. You save a few pesos here; you're going to pay way more there, when this entire baby boom generation hits retirement and lives in poverty. Poverty costs.

I've said before in this House, and I'll say it again, that studies have shown that to keep someone homeless on the streets of BC—the study was done in Vancouver; probably the same in Toronto; done in New York—costs about \$45,000 to \$55,000 a year. That's \$45,000 to

\$55,000 to keep someone homeless. That's health care costs, that's policing, that's shelters, that's food banks and all the other little incidentals. It's been proven.

So the question is, are we going to pay it out that way? Or are we going to pay it out with some degree of dignity so that our seniors actually get some money that they can live on, so that they are not absolutely condemned to poverty? It doesn't cost the taxpayer any more; in fact, it probably costs them less to have a dignified pension guarantee fund than it does to pay in all of those other ways, so certainly we support that. Again, we're talking about 65% of the population that doesn't even have a pension fund, never mind those who have paid into one, whose company has gone bankrupt so that expands it as well.

Let's be very clear, for those who are younger and watching, have switched over from Oprah for some strange reason to watch us pontificate here in this place. Let's be very clear about what CPP does pay: "Not much" is the simple answer. If you have to rely on what you're going to get from the federal government, you're going to get probably around \$1,000 a month, maximum—\$1,000 a month. And that's not even speaking to those women who spent their lives at home or weren't working in a job where they paid in.

What does \$1,000 a month get you in Toronto? Well, talk to those who receive Ontario disability, ODSP. Poverty is what it gets you. It barely pays the rent, it means that you'll probably have to go to a food bank to supplement your income or work under the table, which of course is going to happen more and more, especially with this government's new retrograde tax. You have to, because you can't survive on it.

Then there are the rest of us who are more middle-class in income, who invested in casino capitalism—who invested in RSPs. The Minister of Finance today admitted that he did say to the press yesterday that he didn't even want to look at his RSP statements lately. He knows what the market has done. He knows that if you look at your statement, for those who squirreled some money away, boy oh boy, you're lucky if you didn't lose at least 30% of it. That's what we've relegated our seniors to. Now maybe you can ride that out if you're younger, but you can't ride that out if you're in your late 50s and in your 60s. You're going to have to take out that money, worth 30% less than when you put it in.

We cannot count on RSPs, we cannot count on casino capitalism, to pay for a dignified retirement for our seniors. We have to rely on the government, and not just the federal government, on both levels of government, on the provincial government as well, particularly in this economy where you can't rely on your company because your company might not be there when you retire.

The member mentioned that we had brought in a bill. We bring in these bills; they bring in these bills. We keep trying, in this case, just to give seniors access to their own money.

We think seniors deserve more than just access to their own money. We think seniors deserve a dignified retire-

ment. We think seniors who have worked all their lives in one way or another, whether for a company, out there in the workforce, or as is the case with many women, part-time, at home, deserve not to live in poverty when they hit the age that they can't work any more.

Increasingly, this is happening with companies that are not investing in pension plans for their employees. They're expensive. They cost a lot of money. So it's got to come back to the government. This is one of those social security nets that we in the New Democratic Party have fought for, are partly responsible for across Canada, and are still fighting for, just like medicare. We're still fighting for basic dignity for those, in this case, seniors, so that they don't live in poverty just because they can't work.

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This is a question of human rights. It's a question of dignity. It truly, truly is a question, for the members, of accessing their very own money. But it's also incumbent upon the government to do the right thing. Don't wait for the federal government. That's just a way of pushing off the inevitable. Do something. Do something now. Other provinces already have. It wouldn't be difficult. Companies over a certain size and, quite frankly—

Mr. Khalil Ramal: Which provinces?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: The member asks which provinces. Okay, I'm going to dig it out. I've got a minute left. Here's the problem. BC, western Canada, Alberta all have proposals coming forward on a provincial level that are going to put some money into a pension plan. Really, in part, it would require companies over a certain size to have pension plans that have some meat on their bones.

We're asking the government to act not only on this bill but on the whole thorny issue of pensions and a dignified retirement for all Ontarians.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I'm pleased to stand up and engage in the debate on Bill 116, presented by the member from Halton. It's a bill to allow retirees to have access to locked-in funds.

I know it's an important issue for all of us across the province, even for us; we have no pension in this place, but we have some kind of RSP investments. Yesterday, most of us went to a luncheon put on to allow the people who manage our funds, our RSPs, to tell us about our funds, what happened to them. Sadly, as everybody knows, we lost a lot of it. You were there. Almost everybody was there. We listened to the whole story about the pension fund which we have had since we got elected in 2003, and some of us in 2007.

Interjection.

Mr. Khalil Ramal: Not pension, just RSPs. I called them pensions—RSPs. As you know, as has been said many different times, only 35% from across the province of Ontario have a pension, and the majority of 65% don't have that pension. This issue has been raised many different times in this House, and our Premier has said many different times, and the public has said, that the pension

benefits guarantee fund has not been properly managed since 1981. That's why we have to open that debate, that dialogue, to find some kind of adequacy for this fund and manage it properly, because many people depend on it.

That's why our Premier asked the federal government to come forward in an open national debate about pensions, as the member from Parkdale-High Park mentioned earlier. This issue is not just provincial; it's federal-provincial jurisdiction. All of us are responsible to look after the pensioners across the province of Ontario, whether you work for a company or work for a small business person or a person who runs his or her own business.

I think it's our obligation to create some kind of protection mechanism for people across the province of Ontario, so when they get old and cannot work they have something to rely on and something to support them in their daily lives.

I want to tell the member from Halton that we are the government who opened the funds from zero to 25% in our 2007 budget, and also in this year's budget, 2009, we unlocked it from 25% to 50%. I think that's huge progress.

If we look at other provinces, we sit in the middle between all the provinces, because in some provinces, like Quebec, which is the second-biggest province after Ontario, you cannot have access to any percentage of your locked-in fund. Other provinces, like Alberta, have 50% like Ontario. So many jurisdictions like to see some kind of protection for seniors. They cannot allow people to unlock their pension at the age of 55. The life expectancy right now in the province of Ontario is almost 75 years of age for males and 80 for females, so it's still between about 20 and 25 years of life expectancy. If this person or that person unlocks and has access to the whole fund, what's going to happen if they lose it, in certain circumstances? They cannot go back and depend on Ontario Works or disability or some sort of support from the government. This is a protection mechanism for people across the province of Ontario, and I know for sure that it's our duty and obligation to protect our seniors.

In this 2009 budget, we implemented many different rules and regulations to allow pensioners to have some kind of support—the 20% of occupancy cost, up to \$625 per person for seniors if they live in their homes. All these mechanisms are put in place to support seniors to live in comfort.

I know it's a difficult time for all of us. Whether we're seniors, middle-aged or young people, we are facing economic difficulties and challenges in our economy, not just in Ontario, not just in Canada, not just in North America but around the globe. So I think strongly that it's our responsibility as a province and as Canadians. The federal and provincial governments should have some kind of summit to discuss the very important issue of pensions for all people, without any exception.

It's been mentioned many different times that we thought companies like GM or Chrysler were too big to fail, and they're failing. Now there are big questions about their pensions. Nortel is a huge company; it basic-

ally dominated the whole earth. What happened? They've almost gone bankrupt.

I think it's important for all of us to open that discussion with the federal government, because pensions are the jurisdiction of the federal government, and have an honest and sincere discussion. I believe we have a responsibility, as elected officials, to protect the people who work very hard in their lifetime. They expect from us, when they get old, when they are retired, that they have some kind of protection and support.

I'm wondering if the member from Halton's bill can achieve the goal. I don't feel it can achieve the goal. We did what we could do. We opened it up from zero to 25% last term, and we opened it in this budget from 25 to 50%. I think the 50% level is very important for all of us. But the most important thing—I echo the member from Parkdale-High Park—should be a pension for all of us, some kind of protection mechanism for all the people who live in the province of Ontario.

I'm looking forward to hearing many speakers speak on this file. I think it's important, and I'm looking forward to continuing the debate and listening to all the speakers from both sides of the house. Thank you for allowing me to speak.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Ted Arnott: I'm pleased to have the chance this afternoon to speak to second reading of Bill 116, An Act to amend the Pension Benefits Act to allow transfers of locked-in pension funds to registered retirement income funds.

We know that this bill was introduced in the Legislature by the member for Halton on October 23, 2008. I want to commend the member for Halton for bringing forward this bill. He's an outstanding member in this Legislature. I know he is very proud of the fact that his grandfather, Tom Kennedy, served in this place and became a long-serving Minister of Agriculture as well as Premier of Ontario. Ted Chudleigh carries on his fine tradition here with his service as a member of provincial Parliament.

Ted Chudleigh is a strong and forceful advocate for his views, and when there's a big issue in his riding, you can count on him to bring it forward in this Legislature. Most recently, I heard him talking this week about the Milton hospital: the urgency of that issue and the need for the government to respond to it. He deserves enormous credit for the work he does, and he deserves credit for bringing forward Bill 116.

This bill is intended to allow pensioners to open up locked-in retirement accounts, and I want to express support for the principle of this legislation. We know that beginning in the mid-1980s, Ontario began to reform pension laws so that Ontarians who terminated their employment before the age of retirement were able to have increased control over their accrued pension benefits. I am also aware that before then, benefits remained in particular pension plans until the age of retirement.

This makes more sense, as we consider the fact that most Ontarians will have several jobs over the course of

their careers, and we know that's increasingly a trend in today's society. The current system, which places accrued benefits into LIRAs, locked-in retirement accounts, as a sort of pension RRSP makes sense for people who want to manage their money centrally while saving tax-free for the future. However, when LIRA holders are forced at retirement to transfer funds into life income funds, locked-in life income funds or life annuities, they should have the freedom to cash in some or all of their LIRAs. Certainly, new life income fund holders can access 25% of their assets but must leave the rest locked in. The 25% regulation, I'm told, is recent and was implemented in January 2008 as part of the Liberal government's budget in 2007. Before then, life income fund holders had no access to their pension money at the point of transfer.

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It has already been pointed out that during the 2007 election campaign, included in our party's platform was a popular measure to allow pensioners to unlock their pensions. John Tory's plan was to allow pensioners to have a 50% withdrawal at age 55 and the remainder at age 65. We're also aware that in the 2008 federal budget the government of Canada amended the law surrounding federally regulated locked-in pensions, allowing for access of up to 50%. So it seems there's a trend in Ontario and in Canada today to allow pensioners more access to their locked-in retirement accounts, based on the belief that it is their money that they have earned and that they have saved through the years, and that it's highly paternalistic for the state to dictate to them that they can't have access to it.

Again, Mr. Chudleigh introduced this legislation last fall, and it's receiving second reading today. Mr. Chudleigh, the member for Halton, has made the argument this afternoon that during this time of economic turmoil, the timing for this sort of legislation couldn't be better, because money in locked-in pensions is dwindling with the markets and people are frightened that their savings could evaporate. In fact, if we allowed greater access to those savings, in many cases it might be a stimulus to the economy of Ontario. That's a point that has been made as well, and I think it's a good point.

I have heard from a number of people outside of my riding, but in neighbouring ridings close to mine, who have expressed support for this idea for some time. I think it's important that we have this debate. I hope that the government members will support the principle of this legislation; I don't know why they wouldn't. I would hope that they would allow the bill to be sent to a legislative committee so we could have public hearings on the bill and have further discussion on the issue, because I think there is a strong movement afoot in the province of Ontario to promote this idea. I think we're right to be giving it consideration and I think it's essential that we respond to the will of the people in this regard and give them the opportunity to have this discussion and ensure that the discussion takes place at a standing committee of the Legislature. I assume the member would want that to happen.

I know that we're coming toward the end of a legislative session, it would appear, where there are rumours the government might prorogue. We don't know that for sure—the government hasn't given a firm indication in that regard—but certainly there are a significant number of private members' bills right now that are before committee. There's a logjam, I think, in every committee in terms of private members' bills, so I would hope that the government, if it does prorogue, will designate private members' bills as a priority for carryover to the next session. I think that there's nothing stopping them from doing this, and I certainly would encourage them, assuming this bill passes, as well as Bill 169, the one that I led off in debate earlier—that those bills would be kept alive going forward into the next session. I would encourage the government to give consideration in that regard.

I look forward to the remainder of the debate, but again, I would commend and applaud the member for Halton for bringing forward this particular piece of legislation and encourage all members to support it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Wayne Arthurs: I appreciate the opportunity to speak to Bill 116, presented by Mr. Chudleigh from the riding of Halton. I've heard some of the comments before and I certainly find them interesting.

We as a government, during the past three years now or thereabouts, have moved on the locked-in pension funds—the LIFs, locked-in funds—from no capacity to access those, first in the 2007 budget under the directorship of then-Minister Sorbara, from zero to 25%; and more recently under the direction of Minister Duncan in this particular budget year, yet to be passed, although one would hope that now that the committee has finished its work and it's back before this Legislature for third reading, with the will of the Legislature, it will see approval and that that percentage would then move from 25% up to 50% of those locked-in funds being accessible.

I've heard the generalized comments about treating people like children and being paternalistic, and I find it odd that when there was the opportunity for another government of another day to take some initiative in this regard, that didn't occur. It has been under our watch, over two successive mandates now, that we have looked carefully at this, have looked at what other jurisdictions are doing and have taken action to move from no access to those funds to access to half of those funds, at the same time recognizing that these funds were intended, are intended, to provide an income stream to those pensioners, to those seniors. Pensions are set up in a fashion that provides an ongoing income stream. This provides a balance, a blend, between providing a higher direct degree of control of those dollars for the pensioner to choose how they would use those and retaining the opportunity and necessity for some of those to be part of a fixed stream of income.

We draw upon the examples in other jurisdictions because, obviously, it's often valuable for us, within the context of 10 provinces and the federal government, to look to others to see what they're doing or not doing,

what their experience has been and what their success or lack thereof has been. When we look at this particular issue in that regard, what we see is that the federal government, as was just pointed out by an earlier speaker, moved to the 50% level in 2008. We believe it's an appropriate action for the largest of the provinces population-wise, and presumably then with the largest group of seniors, and presumably then with the largest structures of locked-in funds in pension, to emulate in effect what the federal government is currently doing, so that in managing those there's some consistency there in approach. We'll use some of their experience in evaluating the success of our own.

The example that has been used of the one province, and only one province, that has allowed for 100% unlocking is Saskatchewan. I'm not aware of their situation. I'm not going to take any exception to what the member from Halton said in respect to—he's not aware, nor am I, of any cases where that provision has been abused. But Saskatchewan is a province of less than a million people and Ontario is a province of some 13 million people. In a matter of scale, at the very least, we have to be a little more cognizant, take a little more judicious approach to this particular matter.

There are only, currently—because we're not including Ontario yet, until such time as the budget is dealt with here by this Legislative Assembly—two provinces at the 50% level, those being Alberta and Manitoba, and the federal government. There are two provinces that are only at 25% of the unlocking provision, being—sorry, one in addition to Ontario, currently. Those would be New Brunswick and, as we stand here today, Ontario. There are four that remain in a situation where those funds are fully locked in. So when one looks across the breadth of the country, only one jurisdiction has taken the actions that are proposed by this bill; three—two plus the federal government—are at the 50% level, to where Ontario will likely be moving; and the balance are at 25% or less of the amount.

So I think we've got the right approach, the right balance, to doing this in providing both appropriate access for seniors to funds and at the same time protecting them in the context of an ongoing revenue stream in the form of a pension benefit.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Peter Shurman: I've gotten used to this place enough to know that when we debate any individual bill, we can do it quite circuitously and listen to an awful lot of factual material that may not be particularly pertinent to what we're debating. So while I hear debate on this bill ranging to what the province should create by way of pensions and how we should increase amounts that people receive, and while I may agree with those things, I want us to focus a little bit on what we are talking about today.

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I'm standing here in support of my colleague from Halton and his Bill 116, which talks about the unlocking of pension plans. But what I'm really doing is, I'm

speaking on behalf of seniors, who have been the builders of our province. This bill, to me, is really about something that, as members know, is near and dear to my heart, and that is nanny-statism. The question here for me is whether or not we as legislators are prepared to grant adults of retirement age and beyond the ability to control their own destinies and to make their own decisions.

I don't think that, if you take a look at the broad landscape, anybody who has been in control of funds that they're not in control of now has done such a wonderful job that we could say that not having them in control has been beneficial. Everybody has lost over the last little while, and it is that very fact that has put us here today, talking about whether or not we want to unlock these funds.

Recent market fluctuations are more than enough reason to support Bill 116. It isn't only the smart thing to do, for me; it is the right thing to do, and the reason, primarily, is that there's no cost to anyone to do this. This is not a burden on the government, it's not a burden on anyone else and it acknowledges something that is endemic to being a senior who has a pension. As my colleague from Parkdale-High Park pointed out, we're somewhere in the 60% to 70% range of all Ontarians at this point who have no pension at all. So the assumption at least has to be that the 30%-plus of people who do have locked-in pensions have them either because they contributed along with the company or a company contributed on their behalf; or maybe they made their own contributions and wound up with locked-in funds and now find themselves beset with what those funds are kicking out or what their other sources of income might be in non-registered investments, so as to compromise their lifestyle at a point where perhaps they have five, 10, 20 or maybe at most 25 years left, if you take the average life span to be somewhere in the 80 or low 80s range.

Unlocking pensions will empower seniors to take control of their lives and to determine their own future. Ontario always seems to be lagging behind other provinces. For once, we need to be the leaders of a new policy. It's almost as if we're putting our foot into cold water to see if it's okay because we've done a little bit and a little bit is okay, but maybe not a lot. It doesn't seem right to me.

As my colleagues have pointed out, there are three provinces that allow more access to locked-in accounts as of this date than Ontario. Saskatchewan, at a full 100%, seems to be doing quite well right now; Alberta is at 50% and Manitoba is at 50%. The federal government, for goodness' sake, allows 50% access, so I have to ask the question: What's wrong with us? I've heard from various colleagues on the Liberal side. I've heard all kinds of data that, while not pertinent to the bill, is pertinent to how we treat our seniors and what wonderful things we're doing for them. There are seniors out there who have no business having to decide between food and medicine, and yet those same seniors are doing that.

This is by no means a bailout. There are anywhere between 500,000 and two million people in Ontario right

now who are unable to access locked-in pension accounts, and because of the way statistics are handled in this country, we don't even know what that number is; that's a wide range. The accrued benefits within those accounts total hundreds of millions of dollars. Think about what happens when you liberate those dollars. They get spent, for one thing. That's the problem: There's not enough money to spend. When you put that money into the economy, first of all, it becomes taxable, and secondly, it creates wealth in other areas as the distribution of all of those hundreds of millions of locked-up dollars—indeed, perhaps billions—goes into the economy.

With the way the pensions are administered, Ontarians may not receive the sum of their locked-in pensions until age 90. Fellow members, most of us don't make it to age 90, and we'd better bear that in mind, especially, as referenced earlier, due to the fact that we, in this chamber, are beset by some of the same problems that we're describing here today. With the average lifespan of a Canadian being just over 80, our seniors will be losing out on hundreds of thousands of dollars because this government will not give them control over their own money.

There is one argument against unlocking pensions: that retirees would blow all their money at once, become poor and live off the public purse. I have to say that if you have been prudent enough to keep it in reserve at this point, to work for a living all of that time to create this wealth, are you really the person who is going to go to a gambling casino the moment these funds are unlocked, blow them and then come begging for welfare? I don't think so.

There is no evidence to suggest this is the case at all, and when we take a look at other provinces like Saskatchewan where seniors are given more freedom, it shows that they are not likely to spend all their money at once or waste it on foolish purposes. I, for one, will be supporting Bill 116, and I urge my fellow members to do likewise.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate in the 10 seconds you have left?

The honourable member for Halton, Mr. Chudleigh, you have up to two minutes for your response.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: I would like to thank the member for Parkdale-High Park for her passionate call for an examination of the pensions that are available in Ontario and for the support of this private member's bill.

I was disappointed in the member from London-Fanshawe when he suggested that he couldn't see his way clear to support this bill, that the 50% regulation that is in place now is fine. It's kind of like being half pregnant; it's not here and it's not there. I think the member for Pickering-Scarborough East indicated the same kind of support for the 50% level but not the whole thing—it's good enough for now.

That's disappointing, because I think our seniors in Ontario deserve better. I think they have proven their worth in this province. They have built this province. As the member for Thornhill pointed out, they are such a valuable part of our society, and they have made such

tremendous contributions to this province that they deserve much better than that—as did the member for Wellington-Halton Hills, who pledged his support.

I think that it's important that that member's comments be considered when thinking about how you might cast your vote on this particular bill. It's one that deserves support, because the seniors in this province have earned your support. They've earned your support over a lifetime of working in Ontario, building this province, making it the greatest province in Canada. Unfortunately, we have slipped into have-not status and we're losing some of that, but during our seniors' day, when they were the players in Ontario's economy, we were number one, and they deserve your support on this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The time for that ballot item has expired, and we will vote on Mr. Chudleigh's bill in about 50 minutes.

Orders of the day.

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: I move third reading of Bill 30, An Act to provide protection for minors participating in amateur sports.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Would you like to move second reading?

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: Maybe that was an intentional Freudian slip, Mr. Speaker, but we all try, right?

I move second reading of Bill 30, An Act to provide protection for minors participating in amateur sports.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): I'll have to try that myself some time.

PROTECTION OF MINORS IN AMATEUR SPORTS ACT, 2009 LOI DE 2009 SUR LA PROTECTION DES MINEURS PARTICIPANT À DES SPORTS AMATEURS

Mr. Ouellette moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 30, An Act to provide protection for minors participating in amateur sports / Projet de loi 30, Loi visant à protéger les mineurs qui participent à des sports amateurs.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Mr. Ouellette, pursuant to standing order 98, you have up to 12 minutes for your presentation.

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: I have a series of prepared notes, but I think I'm just going to talk from the heart, as I try to do so many times. As the member from Brant knows—and if he hadn't caught us or mentioned anything, we might have been able to have a little bit of an interesting time if we had been able to get that first move through.

But as the member from Brant knows, we try to move forward in this Legislature, and we try to live by the premise that we need to look to the future through the eyes of the children of today when making decisions on

how things should operate. It's so important, and I have to tell you while we start on this that there are tens of thousands of volunteer coaches, refs, managers and trainers who volunteer in so many kids' sports out there and do such a fantastic job each and every day.

I have to tell you since my wife, Dianne—and my sons were old enough, Josh and Garrett, in order to play hockey, this coming fall will be the first time that I am not coaching.

Even as a minister, I still took the time to spend, because as the members here know, and the public at large don't really know, you spend so much time and are so focused on doing your job—and if any elected official if doing a job correctly, there's always something that can be done—sometimes the family just happens to slip by. So I made sure, even as a minister, that I was taking care and coaching those kids and to be there, to make sure the time was dedicated directly to my kids.

1520

If you think politics is a tough job, you want to try coaching the future NHLers. At least in the minds of some of the parents out there, those kids are going to the NHL and the difficulty—you try, because it's always the coach's fault. There was one person, Terry Kelly, who provided me with a book that essentially said you can always tell the first-born and the first playing in hockey in Canada because the coach will never be able to achieve the expectations of those parents, and how true that is.

But I have to tell you that it goes back to when I was much the age of my son Garrett right now. At the time we had a change in principals at the school, and I'm going to explain this. Members haven't heard this before. More or less all of us have a reason why we come to Queen's Park, and this is one of the key reasons that I'm here. In grade 6, when we had a change of principals, my father came to me and got into police mode. He was at the end of his career, 33 years in policing; he was the chief of police in Thunder Bay. He said, "Whatever you do, I want you to stay away from that principal in that school." I looked at him and I said, "Why?" "Because I said so." So, when he goes into police mode, you just kind of back off and say, "Okay, Dad." About two years later I asked, "Why did you say that to me, Dad? Why did you tell me to stay away from that principal?" He said because he had arrested the principal for sexually molesting a 14-year-old boy at Continental Massage in downtown Oshawa. There was absolutely nothing he could do to eliminate that individual from his profession at that time. The only thing he could do was to make sure that I stayed away. When I was in grade 8, I thought that was wrong, and if I ever get a chance in my life to make something right, I'm going to try and rectify that situation.

Quite frankly, it took a little while. One of the results came when another colleague of ours introduced a pedophile bill that became the registry and then went Canada-wide as a result of the actions, because of what I initiated in the Ministry of Education, and it wasn't until another minister came in that we were actually able to get that

through. We move on in life. We've now addressed that issue, so we believe.

I'm coaching kids' hockey, novice, where I've got five-, six-, seven- and eight-year-olds on the team, and it's rep hockey. After a game, a parent came up to me and said, "See that referee out there? That person should not be around kids." I said, "Why do you say that?" He said, "I can't tell you why." I said, "Well, why would you say that?" "I'm telling you that that referee out there should not be around kids."

I listened and I tried to find out some details. First of all I found out that the individual worked as an emergency room nurse. I found out the individual's name and did a background check, as we would all expect our MPPs to do to check into these things. Lo and behold, I found out that this particular referee had multiple sex convictions, some of them very violent, from my understanding of it. The police told me at the time that that individual would never be around their kids.

So I started to check with Hockey Canada and the Ontario Minor Hockey Association. I said, "Well, how can this referee be out there?" You see, most people don't realize that you can start refereeing hockey at age 14, which effectively would mean this individual, who's a convicted sex offender, would be in the same change room as a 14-year-old and there would be no way to check or find out any background at all.

The same individual had been convicted of impersonating a police officer, I found out. Since then, fortunately, the individual has been deported out of the country, back to his country of origin, and has been removed from the system. But the concern I had was, how can this take place? How can I make sure? In hockey I teach my kids to respect the referees, respect the coaches and everybody else. If one of the those referees came up to one of my sons and said, "I want to talk to you for a sec," they certainly would have gone away because of what they're taught by the coach at that time, and who knows what would have happened?

So I started to check. I said, "We've got to fix this." I contacted the Ontario Minor Hockey Association to, lo and behold, find out that that's one association of about 12 to 15 in the province of Ontario in hockey alone. I contacted Hockey Canada and said, "Look, we have to do something about this." I'm sure many have heard about the Sheldon Kennedy case. He came forward about what took place at that particular time with hockey. We found out that some associations in the province of Ontario had a policy whereby individuals who manage, coach or train kids would have to have a background police check. It's called a vulnerable persons check.

Effectively, what a vulnerable persons check is, they go to the police department, ask for a report, that is then sealed and given, and those individuals would then submit it to the league. What this does is it tells not just if you're a convicted sex offender but also, for example, if you're a convicted drug dealer. Would you want convicted drug dealers dealing with kids—and all those sorts of things? That's up to the individual leagues to deter-

mine, to make sure that due diligence has taken place, to ensure that the kids are protected today to eliminate them. So there's a vulnerable persons check and a series of reviews to make sure that those areas are looked at in the best interests of the sport.

As we started checking and contacting—we dealt with the great work here at the Leg assembly done by Leg research—we wondered, why is it just hockey? What about the other sports? What about baseball, ringette, soccer, lacrosse, basketball and all the other amateur sports that take place in the province of Ontario? Lo and behold, we found out that there was no consistent policy through any of the associations or no requirement. A lot of those associations actually had no requirement at all for any background checks for the individuals to ensure that they're individuals who should be allowed to participate or be around kids in any way, shape or form.

All we have to do is look at some of the newspaper articles, recent ones, as a matter of fact. When I look at them, I can see the dates. This one right here is from May 4, where a 52-year-old individual was convicted on two counts of—well, we won't say it—sexual offence with a female under the age of 14. We go back to February—multiple convictions for making child pornography, where the individual coached hockey and soccer for a number of age groups. These are continuing on an on-going basis because these associations have not taken it into consideration, to make sure that due diligence is done to find out whether these individuals, these convicted individuals, are removed and disallowed from participating in sports in the province.

I'm here today to try and gain the support of the government and the third party to make sure that we can move forward so that the protection of our youth continues.

There was some concern from some of the organizations that came forward—this isn't the first time that I've brought this forward—such that, "Well, it's going to be cost-prohibitive. We're going to lose a lot of volunteers because they don't want to do that." My immediate response to those individuals was, "Is that the sort of protection you want to provide? Are those the individuals that you actually want to be looking after kids?"

Quite frankly, there is no exception. If you don't want to go through that process because you've got something that you don't want people to know, then maybe you shouldn't be there. I know as a coach, as an individual who spends hundreds of hours every year coaching hockey, as I did this year—you take the time to be with the kids, to do it all, not only on the ice, but also the practices to prepare and everything else—that I want to make sure that I'm not painted with that same brush as the other coaches, not those who are doing a great job but the ones who aren't; that very, very small percentage, less than 1% of the individuals out there, who may paint all with a bad brush.

There are a lot of great individuals who spend thousands and thousands of hours working in the province. Myself, I'm the designated director for abuse for one of

the Ontario senior A hockey teams. It's just a matter of coming forward and spending the time to make sure that our youth in the province are protected.

That pretty well sums up all I have to say on this topic. I hope that if there are any questions that the members have, I would be more than happy to answer them to the best of my ability, because we've worked long and hard with a lot of associations to move this file forward, to get it back here on the floor once again.

I thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I hope to gain the whole support of the House.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Right off the top, I'll say that I'm going to support this bill. It's, again, kind of a no-brainer. I was actually quite shocked that this wasn't the case when I read the bill. I just assumed, because I haven't coached sports—my husband always did that—that this was the case.

As a minister in the United Church, I know we ask all of our Sunday school teachers, we ask all of our volunteers to do a CPIC check. Again, you want to know about difficulty recruiting volunteers? That's an area where it is difficult to recruit volunteers, and yet we still did that; it was our policy. It is a policy across most denominations, I think, to do that. So again, I mistakenly assumed that it was the case across the board with volunteers who coached sports.

I understand the initial response from some of those organizations about this: "We don't have enough volunteers as it is. It's expensive. It's \$60 a piece." But as the member mentioned, there are ways around that. Organizations that spend lots of money on other things can certainly help their volunteers, if they want to increase volunteerism, to pay those prices if the individual can't afford it.

1530

We do have some slight caveats in the New Democratic Party, because the vulnerable persons check, which can be quite far-ranging—and I think the member would agree on this. We'd like to see this go to committee because, certainly, somebody who has had a DUI and joined AA or overcome that—we don't want to catch with too big a net people who might be wonderful parents, wonderful coaches. What we want to do is focus in on those who are a potential threat to our children. So that's a question mark there. The other question mark, and you mentioned it yourself, is the fact that people often start coaching under 16, when there's not a check available. So this isn't really the silver bullet.

It still has to be—and I'm sure the member is aware of this—accompanied by all of those other good things that all organizations should do: (1) a reference check, (2) an interview, and (3) we certainly had this policy, and I know a number of institutions and organizations that deal with children do, where a child is not ever alone with a person, but that two people are always in the room etc. You can structure situations to avoid or minimize the potential for abuse. I know that this happens in schools

and it happens in churches, synagogues and mosques. It happens across the board, so it should happen in organized children's sports, as well.

Absolutely, this needs to go to committee. I hope it's given fulsome hearing there and people are allowed to depute just so that it can come back to us and be passed.

Again, I was quite astounded to find out, because of your bill, which is one of the very good reasons that private members' bills should be brought forward, that this wasn't the case already. I think most people watching would think, "Really? They don't do that already? Aren't they frightened of not only the abuse, but lawsuits etc.?"

Any organization that deals with children is literally self-destructive at this point, it seems to me, if it doesn't have a police check process in place and if it doesn't have, besides that process, a whole series of rules and regulations about the supervision of children. If they don't do that, they're certainly behind the curve, and they're certainly opening themselves up to a number of charges, never mind just of abuse.

I know that even where individuals can be—and this has been brought forward to me, for example, in the school system—falsely accused, if you don't have systems in place, there is no way of knowing. It's a "he said, she-said" or "she said, she said" or "he said, he said" situation. So you've got to have those systems, you've got to have the police checks etc.

The other thing that it gives me an opportunity to talk about is the fact that we need more being done across the board for our children. I have the dubious distinction of being the member of provincial Parliament of the riding where both Katelynn Sampson and Holly Jones resided, and so we have had more than our fair share of tragedy where young people are concerned.

This gives me a chance to say thank you to all of those volunteers who showed up the other night to do a butterfly walk for Holly. We go from the park where she was abducted and we walk to her mother's home. Her mother exemplifies somebody not only working through that nightmare, but actually going back to give something back to the community. It was a wonderful evening where all those folks who still suffer because of that rift in the fabric of our community write a message on a butterfly, walk it down to Holly's house, put it on the bush outside her parents' house and there meet and greet with Maria Jones and her husband. It's a phenomenal coming together of an entire community over this tragedy.

Maria has asked that primary prevention be put into public schools, and we have met with teachers' unions, and I've met with the education minister. So we're moving toward that day, and we're hopeful that this will be something that's on the resource list so that all teachers can avail themselves so the children come forward. Part of the problem, as we all know, with the abuse of children is that they don't tell anybody about it, that they suffer it. Certainly, when we've heard of the egregious cases in minor league hockey etc.—it has gone

on for years. Sometimes, only as adults do they come forward, way beyond the time limit when they can actually get some kind of satisfaction. So, certainly, what we want to do as well is have the kind of environment where children are not afraid to speak to those in authority in their lives—to their teachers, their coaches, their mentors, their parents—about what is actually happening, that they're not afraid and that they don't feel it's their problem, their responsibility, their shame, but they do stand up. We in the New Democratic Party absolutely support this. We would support anything that goes to keeping our children safer. I hope the government will as well take this forward. Again, it's a situation where I think it could be strengthened by the input of some folk in the community, some stakeholders. We certainly plan on voting for it. Thank you very much for bringing it forward.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Dave Levac): Further debate?

Mr. Bob Delaney: It's a pleasure to stand up and debate this particular bill. To my colleague from Oshawa, across the aisle, may I say that in government sometimes we have a role imposed upon each of us, and when it comes to many debates, we may be adversaries by the definition of our role, but on this one my colleague from Oshawa and I are on the same side. I know him, not merely as my legislative colleague, but I can truthfully say this is a friend of mine. And by the way, he's a pretty good hockey player, so he knows whereof he speaks.

I have read through the bill, and I have read through some of the notes I asked my staff to prepare. On the whole, this is a good measure. This is the kind of start to an initiative that allows something, an idea like this, to get debated; to get, as the member for Parkdale-High Park said, the benefit of some deputations, some further discussions, where we can take the seed of a good idea, refine it and make it work.

Now, I want to bring up something that concerns me. As my colleague knows full well, I'm a goaltender. At my age and with the job I have, I can't play on a full team anymore. So every now and then, and occasionally regularly, I'll get called to come out, quite often by some of my friends who coach kids' teams. It could be the middle of the summer, it could be during a time when the House is in recess or it could be on really short notice, and they say, "Look, we're shy a goalie. Can you come out and play? We're going to have a practice, and we'd like there to be two goaltenders."

Frankly, I enjoy it. But for me and for others like me who play either sporadically or semi-regularly—I have never had a police check; there's nothing to find—if I wanted to go out and play every now and then on a friend's team, would this impose that obligation on me? I don't know the answer to that, and that's something that would be prescribed in regulations. I'm not sure of the member's intent. Perhaps in his response he could provide me with some direction.

I also want to note that while this bill is admittedly to reduce risks from what the member admits is a small

fraction of 1%, I would just bring out the point that a criminal record check alone is not a solution to protect minors, which again is something that I'm sure he has addressed.

As well, he discusses a little bit about how one deals with the administrative burden and expense of doing it. Is that the obligation of the individual, or is it the obligation of the team? By bringing these issues forth, I am not indicating opposition to the motion; I'm merely indicating that I'm trying it on for size to see how well it would work.

Overall, I think the member's intent here is laudable. I'll tell him flat out that I'm going to stand up and vote for this. This is a good idea. This is the seed of something that the member looks at and says, "We're not doing this. Is there any reason we are not doing this, and should we do this?" I think that's where good legislation begins, and this is where a private member's bill, whether or not it proceeds any further, may subsequently come back either in a refined form or as government legislation. Should it come back as either of those or should it succeed in this incarnation, I'll be the first on my feet to applaud the member, who I think has done a good job here. On that note, I'll give my colleagues a little bit of time as well.

1540

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Peter Shurman: It's good to see so much support on all sides of the House for Bill 30 from my friend from Oshawa.

I once asked my mom when you stop worrying about your children, and I believe at the time she was about 85, which would have made me about 53. Her answer was, "I'll let you know." My mother has since gone to the next life and she never did let me know, so I guess that speaks to what the answer may be. The safety of our children should, and it always does, come first, regardless of the age of our children, but more especially, obviously, our younger children.

I speak not only as a member of provincial Parliament and not only as a colleague of the member who has introduced this legislation, or this would-be legislation, but as a veteran baseball dad and a veteran hockey dad, and also as a veteran Scouts dad where I was the Scout leader. I can tell you that I never had any background check requested of me as a Scout leader, and I probably had in my charge at the time—it was Cubs, actually, so it would have been 10-year-old boys, nine-year-old boys, about 30 of them, and I never requested any investigation into the background of the men who coached my children as either baseball players or young hockey players.

But that was then and this is now. Things have changed, or maybe they haven't changed, but we know a little bit more about some of the things—the unsavoury things—that go on in those locker rooms. I think that, as the member from Parkdale-High Park said previously, it's quite surprising that legislation like this doesn't indeed already exist; it's a piece of legislation that needs to exist.

Bill 30 will protect children in every sport by having mandatory police background checks on all coaches, referees, trainers and on any other position that has interaction with children under age 18. As I said earlier and as I've said many times, I rail about nanny-statism. This is not nanny-statism; this is a bill that ensures the protection of people who are the most vulnerable people in our society.

Interjection.

Mr. Peter Shurman: My friend from London-Fanshawe wonders why I'm not talking about nanny-statism. That's because this isn't, but I'll let you know when we get to one that is.

The member from Oshawa has done extensive research; I know this for a fact. He's worked with Hockey Canada and with the Ontario Hockey Association to find out what, if any, consistency there is in organized sports with regard to checks. This member is a personal friend as well as a colleague. He is an amateur sports enthusiast and a great dad, an enthusiast on behalf of his children and on behalf of other children where sports are concerned, and he knows whereof he speaks.

Many organizations already have mandatory background checks for coaches, managers and trainers, but there is no provincial standard. We have to ask, why not? There are so many horror stories, usually a couple a year, that come out, and for every one that comes out you have to wonder if indeed there aren't 10 or 20 that never make their way out, because children, being the vulnerable human beings that they are, often the things that violate their privacy and violate them on some occasions—they are under threat that scares them so much that they never, ever tell. Even worse, there's no obligation for referees to have a vulnerable persons police check in many associations.

With all the nonsense that the government brings in, you would think that this would have been one of their priorities. We are just in final debate on third reading of Bill 157, which is about mandatory reporting in schools. It's about safe schools, and while our side of the House doesn't agree with the government side of the House on how this is being done, we do agree that it should be done. If we can be talking about this in the context of schools, where we're dealing with licensed professional adults who are authority figures in the lives of our children, why would we not be looking at adult authority figures about whom we know nothing?

Recalling again the people who coached my children, these were other guys just like me. I'm a good guy. They were probably all good guys, but you don't know, and that's why you want to know and that's why we're looking for checks behind the closed doors of a dressing room, most people here would understand, where parents are not allowed. When the kids get older, for the most part—we don't know what's happening when the kids are younger. We want to know and we find out too late.

Even though referees are not normally alone with players, there are many refs who are under 18 themselves. These people are not yet experienced in life and

they are capable of doing harm. This bill protects not just the players, but everyone involved. It protects officials, it protects parents and it protects the organizers of any of these leagues. My legislative assistant, Melissa Coxon, has been coaching ringette and hockey since she was in grade 9. In the league that she's involved with, she had to get a vulnerable persons police check in order to do so. That was good thinking on the part of the leagues where she works, but this is not mandatory, and as of today we should resolve, as members of provincial Parliament, that we're going to make it so. When children are getting community service hours for high school, which is how she had started coaching so young, we need to be sure that the children that they are coaching are safe. When my kids were young and playing sports, I wanted to know who they were interacting with but I never thought to ask because it wasn't top of mind.

On April 18, a former Toronto minor hockey coach was charged in relation to child pornography. What were the photos? Who and what was depicted? We don't know, but these are the types of people that we need to protect our children from, and that is why I support Bill 30.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I'm pleased and honoured to enter the debate on this important topic and to talk on Bill 30, Protection of Minors In Amateur Sports Act, 2009.

Who doesn't support children? Who doesn't support minors in this society? I think it's our obligation to support them. I know the member from Oshawa has a great passion for minors and he has also often volunteered and coached hockey in his riding.

As you know and as all the members of this House know, we have a strong volunteer base in the province of Ontario. More than 5 million-strong people across the province of Ontario every year donate more than 800 million hours to support many different aspects of our economy and our communities, and most of them support sport activities, whether soccer, hockey or baseball, and various sport activities across the province of Ontario. Most of those sport people, the coaches or the minors, go in goodwill to learn and practise and be fit.

The parents send their kids to be coached by someone, and the most important thing is to make sure that someone is safe, is not going to abuse those kids, and we hear lots of different and scary stories about many different issues that happen while people are taking courses or practising soccer, hockey or whatever. So we hear a lot about sexual abuse, we have a lot of psychological abuse and we have a lot of physical abuse, and all this occurs while people are practising sports, when they're sent by their parents, and the parents, on goodwill, believe strongly that the person who donates that time should be a good person. But sadly, some people who go into this area, in their mind they want to go to abuse someone.

I think it's our obligation as a government, as elected officials, as people of this province, to protect the minors among us. That's why we are the first jurisdiction in Can-

ada to bring the sex offender registry act, which registered all the sex offenders across the province of Ontario. It's also to make sure, to all the people who practise sports, who participate in those events, that they are well-known to the public so that parents can be aware of certain people. I believe, as a result of that, we had about 97% compliance and we also have some kind of charges against the people who committed those crimes. When you are an adult, a certain age, and you go to coach a person who is five, four or 10 years of age and you try to abuse them, whatever abuse occurs—whether sexual, physical, psychological, whatever—is illegal and it's against the law; it's a crime. So it's our obligation to create some kind of protection and encourage the people to do more.

As many of my colleagues said before me, volunteerism is very important for all of us in the province of Ontario. So many people donate their skills, their time, their effort to support others, to give them some kind of support in the community centres. As you know, most of those activities happen because some volunteers want to do it, not because they get paid by the government or get paid by the city or by the federal government or by certain organizations. They do it because they believe in this cause. They believe they're obligated to support others, to create some kind of active community and to support the kids and give them a good education about the future, to give them the guidance they need, whether from playing or from being disciplined—because sport is not just about play or being active; it's also about discipline. You play with others, and they teach you how to be a part of the group and how you play as a group, not as an individual.

1550

I think it's very important for all of us. It's important for our government. It's important for our society to create some kinds of protections and some mechanism to protect vulnerable people among us. The member brings a very important issue to us, and I think I'm going to support his bill. This initiative is calling on all of us to support the children, the vulnerable people who are looking for our support, who are looking for protection.

Therefore, I want to commend the member and, hopefully, we'll continue in this direction and we'll continue to volunteer without any hesitation, and the parents can send their kids to sports activities everywhere without being scared of someone's coach or somebody and also be free of fears of any sexual, physical or psychological abuse that might occur as a result of sending their kids to those sports activities.

I will leave some time for my colleague from Brant to speak on this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Thank you. Further debate?

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I'm pleased to rise and support Bill 30, Protection of Minors in Amateur Sports Act, which was introduced by my colleague from Oshawa. Not only am I pleased to stand and support the bill, I'm pleased to stand and say congratulations and

thank you to the member, not only for introducing the bill but for all the work he's done in coaching minor sports. Obviously it makes a difference not only for his children, but all the other children who he has worked with.

I've had the opportunity to sit beside him in this Legislature for a number of years. He has become a multi-tasker because, as he's listening to the speeches that are being made, he's also sitting there arranging the line up for tonight's hockey game for all the children who will be playing. And of course, he gets that done—the speeches are sometimes long-winded in this place—and he is preparing for the next tournament. I thank him for doing that because it's not everyone who would do it. But there are some people who are doing it for the wrong reasons, and that's why I think this bill is so important.

The goal of this bill is simple. It's one that I believe every member of this Legislature would agree with: It is to protect our children. Bill 30 would require coaches, referees, managers and officials to be subject to criminal background checks in order to participate in organized amateur sports with children under the age of 18.

Some amateur sports organizations require these checks but, unfortunately, not all organizations do. It isn't consistent as to who requires it and how much of that policy is enforced. The member in his presentation pointed out the fact that some organizations have concerns with this bill because they think it will reduce the number of volunteers. I wondered if maybe we put in for the same organizations that believe it's not appropriate to have these checks an obligation that they must notify the parents that their coaches are not subject to these checks. I'm sure they would all then want to do checks for their coaches to make sure that all our children were safe. All Ontario children should have that level of protection.

I know that most coaches are parents or people who want to give back to the community. These are people who care about our children and want to teach them the important lessons of team work and fair play that can be learned through organized sports.

Coaching is one of the most sincere forms of volunteering. It takes time, passion and knowledge and many hours of commitment, as I mentioned about my colleague. Volunteers are willing to give up their evenings, their weekends to ensure that our kids can play sports. Between games, practice and tournaments, I know that it's a big time commitment and, in the season of that sport, all their spare time goes into that. For many, it means rushing home from work to make the game or missing social activities. It means early mornings at the rink and standing in the rain.

As a parent, I know the pride of watching your children learn a new skill or watching them excel. I know how great it is to see them enjoying themselves and working together as a team. I know that because other people have coached. I was just telling my colleague that I have three boys and a girl. I have never had the opportunity to be coach for any of their teams, and I am now happy to say that I have four grandchildren. I'm looking forward to the day that I will volunteer, because as one

gets older, one realizes how one misses that part of life. When I hear other people talking about it and see them enjoying it, I realize how much I missed it.

But is it too much to ask that we ensure that they can pass a criminal check when these people do that? I'm sure that most people who are so sincere and willing to give that much to it would be happy to take that criminal check just to be assured that all the people they're working with and all the other people who are coaching their children are the proper people.

The example that the member mentioned about his father telling him to stay away from a certain person—I just don't think that that's an acceptable way of dealing with the situation of the adults who are coaching our children. I think we need to be sure that no child needs to get that warning, not knowing why it is. As parents, we want to make sure that we know our children are being looked after by safe people.

I just wanted to say we did have another bill that was brought in here by the member from Dufferin-Caledon. It was a bill respecting the criminal record checks for volunteers, and it would fit in with this, because I think it's very important that we don't have legislation that says you have to get a new criminal check for every team. We have to have it based on a certain length of time, I believe, that you get a criminal check and then you can volunteer for all these at the same time.

The father should be able to coach the son's hockey team in the winter and not have to get another criminal check to coach the daughter's soccer team in summer-time. I think we need to make sure that it works seamlessly throughout the system, that people who are going to work with our children in minor sports will be able to do that, and we in society can be assured that our children are there for the enjoyment and can enjoy it in safety and come back out of there having enjoyed the experience and not live the rest of their life sorry that they were involved in that sport.

Thank you very much, the member from Oshawa, for introducing this legislation.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Dave Levac: First, thank you to my friends and colleagues from Mississauga-Streetsville and London-Fanshawe for providing me a few minutes to speak on Bill 30.

Across the floor to my friend from Oshawa, Jerry, I consider you a good friend and a person who is deserving of all the praise that's being heaped on you for the work that you've done, particularly on this issue but also the way in which you conduct yourself here and in your riding at home. You and I have shared a lot of conversations about the things that make the world go around. This is a big winner, and I appreciate very much that you've brought this to us and the research behind it.

As an educator for 25 years, a coach, a parent and, of course, an observer and a lover of children, who need our protection and help consistently and relentlessly, I think this legislation is another signal to the people out there

who may think of the ways in which they can hurt our children that we're going to track you down.

Quite frankly, we will never stop this scourge, but what we will do is we'll signal very loudly and very clearly that the people in this House are saying we've got to put our best foot forward and try to bring this to a stop. I can tell you from personal experience, without getting maudlin, that I've had to deal with this issue as a professional. It is not a joyride. I can tell you factually that it destroys, completely devastates kids, families, neighbourhoods, and indeed, anywhere you go, it's an extremely devastating issue.

You have my full and unequivocal support, and I will do whatever I can to make sure that we pass this legislation in some way or some fashion. I know there have been some questions raised, and I'm absolutely convinced that you'll take care of answering those. Working together, we will help be a very large part of the solution to this scourge that we have to put up with.

I can also share with you that under the circumstances that we're talking, it's very, very important that we signal to the parents that the gift of their children who are presented to those in positions of authority is indeed just that, the gift of that person, and we receive a gift in a way that shows respect. This kind of legislation will make it clear that we love and cherish and indeed support that beautiful gift. I thank you for bringing that legislation forward.

1600

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The honourable member for Oshawa, Mr. Ouellette, you have up to two minutes for your response.

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: I'd like to thank the members from Parkdale-High Park, Mississauga-Streetsville, Thornhill, London-Fanshawe, Oxford and Brant for their comments.

I'm going to try to answer a number of questions here.

First of all, there were some costing issues. The member from Parkdale-High Park mentioned \$60. You should check around or have your volunteers check around, because it doesn't necessarily have to be your local police department; it can be an outside police department. Quite frankly, I'll let you know something right now: There is a competition between police departments on this. Locally, they were charging \$10 when this was initiated, and then the price went up to \$20. But there was an agency that came forward that provided the service out of Nova Scotia, to do the exact same service, at \$15 a person for the Oshawa Minor Hockey Association.

I spoke with OPP individuals who said that they were willing to do this entire service. However, some of the police departments were viewing this as a revenue generator and were concerned that it was income for them that they were going to lose, so they opposed it at that level. That's something we need to be very cognizant of.

With the actual implementation of it, locally, what takes place is you go down to the department of your choice or you have an agency or a group come forward to provide the service for you. You would then take it to

your local team or organization, where you would submit it and where it is reviewed by that association to make sure it's implemented.

To the member for Mississauga-Streetsville, the way it works is that you would actually have it reviewed by the local association once you've received it. The other aspect of it is that, no, as an on-ice volunteer in your particular case—this is directed towards individuals who have official positions and who are in direct control and care of the youth. You as an on-ice volunteer coming in on an occasional basis would not be subject to mandatory review upon the opportunity to go out and help. It's only the coaches, managers, trainers and other individuals.

In closing, I'd just like to say that I spoke about the person I was told to stay away from when I was in grade 6. That individual went to jail 20 or 25 years later for the things he did to kids at the school I went to. I was never one who had any problems at that school; I must admit that. But as legislators, we must ensure that we do all we can to protect the kids of today.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The time allocated for private members' public business hasn't quite expired yet. It will expire in about four minutes, so we'll do some other business.

ROYAL ASSENT

SANCTION ROYALE

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): I beg to inform the House that in the name of Her Majesty the Queen, His Honour the Lieutenant Governor has been pleased to assent to certain bills in his office.

The Deputy Clerk (Mr. Todd Decker): The following are the titles of the bills to which His Honour did assent:

Bill 133, An Act to amend various Acts in relation to certain family law matters and to repeal the Domestic Violence Protection Act, 2000 / *Projet de loi 133, Loi modifiant diverses lois en ce qui concerne des questions de droit de la famille et abrogeant la Loi de 2000 sur la protection contre la violence familiale.*

Bill 150, An Act to enact the Green Energy Act, 2009 and to build a green economy, to repeal the Energy Conservation Leadership Act, 2006 and the Energy Efficiency Act and to amend other statutes / *Projet de loi 150, Loi édictant la Loi de 2009 sur l'énergie verte et visant à développer une économie verte, abrogeant la Loi de 2006 sur le leadership en matière de conservation de l'énergie et la Loi sur le rendement énergétique et modifiant d'autres lois.*

Bill 155, An Act to permit the Province to recover damages and health care costs incurred because of tobacco related diseases and to make a complementary amendment to the Limitations Act, 2002 / *Projet de loi 155, Loi autorisant la province à recouvrer le montant des dommages et du coût des soins de santé engagés en raison des maladies liées au tabac et à apporter une*

modification complémentaire à la Loi de 2002 sur la prescription des actions.

Bill 163, An Act to amend the Greater Toronto Transportation Authority Act, 2006 and to make consequential amendments to another Act / Projet de loi 163, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2006 sur la Régie des transports du grand Toronto et apportant des modifications corrélatives à une autre loi.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Thank you. While we have a minute, perhaps honourable members would like to join me in once again thanking our pages as they're here for a couple of more minutes.

Applause.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): We will suspend the House until 4:05.

The House suspended proceedings from 1604 to 1605.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Order. The time provided for private members' public business has expired.

WORKPLACE SAFETY
AND INSURANCE
AMENDMENT ACT
(FIREFIGHTERS), 2009

LOI DE 2009 MODIFIANT LA LOI
SUR LA SÉCURITÉ PROFESSIONNELLE
ET L'ASSURANCE CONTRE LES
ACCIDENTS DU TRAVAIL (POMPIERS)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): We will deal first with ballot item number 16, standing in the name of Mr. Arnott.

Mr. Arnott has moved second reading of Bill 169, An Act to amend the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997 with respect to firefighters. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

We'll vote on this ballot item after we vote on the next two.

PENSION BENEFITS AMENDMENT ACT
(UNLOCKING PENSION FUNDS), 2009

LOI DE 2009 MODIFIANT LA LOI
SUR LES RÉGIMES DE RETRAITE
(DÉBLOCAGE DES FONDS DE RETRAITE)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Ballot item number 17.

Mr. Chudleigh has moved second reading of Bill 116, An Act to amend the Pension Benefits Act to allow transfers of locked-in pension funds to registered retirement income funds. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed to the motion will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

We'll vote on this item, again, after the next ballot item.

PROTECTION OF MINORS
IN AMATEUR SPORTS ACT, 2009
LOI DE 2009 SUR LA PROTECTION
DES MINEURS PARTICIPANT
À DES SPORTS AMATEURS

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Ballot item number 18.

Mr. Ouellette has moved second reading of Bill 30, An Act to provide protection for minors participating in amateur sports. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Mr. Ouellette.

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: I would refer the bill to the social policy committee.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Is it agreed that the bill be referred to the social policy committee? Agreed.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1608 to 1613.

PENSION BENEFITS AMENDMENT ACT
(UNLOCKING PENSION FUNDS), 2009

LOI DE 2009 MODIFIANT LA LOI
SUR LES RÉGIMES DE RETRAITE
(DÉBLOCAGE DES FONDS DE RETRAITE)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): We will first deal with ballot item number 17.

Mr. Chudleigh has moved second reading of Bill 116. All those in favour of the motion will please rise and remain standing until counted by the Clerk.

Ayes

Arnott, Ted
Chudleigh, Ted
DiNovo, Cheri

Hardeman, Ernie
Ouellette, Jerry J.
Pendergast, Leeanna

Shurman, Peter

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): All those opposed to the motion will please rise and remain standing until counted by the Clerk.

Nays

Aggelonitis, Sophia
Albanese, Laura
Arthurs, Wayne
Balkissoon, Bas
Berardinetti, Lorenzo
Best, Margaret
Broten, Laurel C.
Brownell, Jim
Colle, Mike

Delaney, Bob
Dickson, Joe
Flynn, Kevin Daniel
Jeffrey, Linda
Kular, Kuldeep
Lalonde, Jean-Marc
Levac, Dave
Mori, Reza
Phillips, Gerry

Qadri, Shafiq
Ramal, Khalil
Ruprecht, Tony
Sandals, Liz
Sergio, Mario
Takhar, Harinder S.
Wynne, Kathleen O.
Zimmer, David

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller):
The ayes are 7; the nays are 26.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): I declare the motion lost.

Second reading negatived.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): My apology for changing around the ballot items.

We will now open the doors for 30 seconds.

WORKPLACE SAFETY
AND INSURANCE
AMENDMENT ACT
(FIREFIGHTERS), 2009

LOI DE 2009 MODIFIANT LA LOI
SUR LA SÉCURITÉ PROFESSIONNELLE
ET L'ASSURANCE CONTRE LES
ACCIDENTS DU TRAVAIL (POMPIERS)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): We'll now deal with ballot item number 16, standing in the name of Mr. Arnott.

Mr. Arnott has moved second reading of Bill 169. All those in favour of the motion will please rise and remain standing until counted by the Clerk.

Ayes

Arnott, Ted
Brownell, Jim

Hardeman, Ernie
Jeffrey, Linda

Pendergast, Leeanna
Shurman, Peter

Chudleigh, Ted
DiNovo, Cheri

Lalonde, Jean-Marc
Ouellette, Jerry J.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): All those opposed to the motion will please rise and remain standing until counted by the Clerk.

Nays

Aggelonitis, Sophia
Albanese, Laura
Arthurs, Wayne
Balkissoon, Bas
Berardinetti, Lorenzo
Best, Margaret
Brotten, Laurel C.
Colle, Mike

Delaney, Bob
Dickson, Joe
Flynn, Kevin Daniel
Kular, Kuldip
Levac, Dave
Moridi, Reza
Phillips, Gerry
Qaadri, Shafiq

Ramal, Khalil
Ruprecht, Tony
Sandals, Liz
Sergio, Mario
Takhari, Harinder S.
Wynne, Kathleen O.
Zimmer, David

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller):
The ayes are 10; the nays are 23.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): I declare the motion lost.

Second reading negatived.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): All matters relating to private members' public business having been completed, I do now call orders of the day.

Hon. Gerry Phillips: I move adjournment of the House.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

This House stands adjourned until Monday, May 25, at 10:30 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1618.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Hon. / L'hon. David C. Onley, O.Ont.

Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Steve Peters

Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman, Tonia Grannum

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Aggelonitis, Sophia (LIB)	Hamilton Mountain	
Albanese, Laura (LIB)	York South–Weston / York-Sud–Weston	
Arnott, Ted (PC)	Wellington–Halton Hills	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Arthurs, Wayne (LIB)	Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough-Est	
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Simcoe–Lambton	
Balkissoon, Bas (LIB)	Scarborough–Rouge River	
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand–Norfolk	
Bartolucci, Hon. / L'hon. Rick (LIB)	Sudbury	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels
Bentley, Hon. / L'hon. Christopher (LIB)	London West / London-Ouest	Attorney General / Procureur général
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (LIB)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	
Best, Hon. / L'hon. Margaret R. (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	Minister of Health Promotion / Ministre de la Promotion de la santé
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins–Baie James	
Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (LIB)	St. Catharines	Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Broten, Laurel C. (LIB)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	
Brown, Michael A. (LIB)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Brownell, Jim (LIB)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
Bryant, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	St. Paul's	Minister of Economic Development / Ministre du Développement économique
Cansfield, Hon. / L'hon. Donna H. (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	Minister of Natural Resources / Ministre des Richesses naturelles
Caplan, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Carroll, Hon. / L'hon. M. Aileen (LIB)	Barrie	Minister of Culture / Ministre de la Culture
		Minister Responsible for Seniors / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires des personnes âgées
Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Markham–Unionville	Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / Ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration
Chudleigh, Ted (PC)	Halton	
Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
Craitor, Kim (LIB)	Niagara Falls	
Crozier, Bruce (LIB)	Essex	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
		Deputy Speaker / Vice-président
Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga–Streetsville	
Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale–High Park	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Dombrowsky, Hon. / L'hon. Leona (LIB)	Prince Edward–Hastings	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones
		Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
Duncan, Hon. / L'hon. Dwight (LIB)	Windsor–Tecumseh	Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / Président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement
		Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
		Minister of Revenue / Ministre du Revenu
Dunlop, Garfield (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Elliott, Christine (PC)	Whitby—Oshawa	
Flynn, Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	
Fonseca, Hon. / L'hon. Peter (LIB)	Mississauga East—Cooksville / Mississauga-Est—Cooksville	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Gerretsen, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	Minister of the Environment / Ministre de l'Environnement
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay—Superior North / Thunder Bay—Superior-Nord	Minister of Northern Development and Mines / Ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Hampton, Howard (NDP)	Kenora—Rainy River	
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hoy, Pat (LIB)	Chatham—Kent—Essex	
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West—Glanbrook / Niagara- Ouest—Glanbrook	
Jaczek, Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges—Markham	
Jeffrey, Linda (LIB)	Brampton—Springdale	
Johnson, Rick (LIB)	Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock	
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin—Caledon	
Klees, Frank (PC)	Newmarket—Aurora	
Kormos, Peter (NDP)	Welland	Third Party House Leader / Leader parlementaire de parti reconnu
Kular, Kuldip (LIB)	Bramalea—Gore—Malton	
Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Lalonde, Jean-Marc (LIB)	Glengarry—Prescott—Russell	
Leal, Jeff (LIB)	Peterborough	
Levac, Dave (LIB)	Brant	
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean—Carleton	
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga—Brampton South / Mississauga—Brampton-Sud	
Marchese, Rosario (NDP)	Trinity—Spadina	
Martiniuk, Gerry (PC)	Cambridge	
Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	London North Centre / London- Centre-Nord	Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Mauro, Bill (LIB)	Thunder Bay—Atikokan	
McGuinty, Hon. / L'hon. Dalton (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Premier / Premier ministre Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
McMeekin, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (LIB)	Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough— Westdale	Minister of Government Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux
McNeely, Phil (LIB)	Ottawa—Orléans	
Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa—Vanier	Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound—Muskoka	
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East—Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est—Stoney Creek	
Milloy, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Mitchell, Carol (LIB)	Huron—Bruce	
Moridi, Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	
Munro, Julia (PC)	York—Simcoe	
Murdoch, Bill (PC)	Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound	
Naqvi, Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	
O'Toole, John (PC)	Durham	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Oraziotti, David (LIB)	Sault Ste. Marie	
Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Oshawa	
Pendergast, Leeanna (LIB)	Kitchener-Conestoga	
Peters, Hon. / L'hon. Steve (LIB)	Elgin-Middlesex-London	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
Phillips, Hon. / L'hon. Gerry (LIB)	Scarborough-Agincourt	Chair of Cabinet / Président du Conseil des ministres Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Prue, Michael (NDP)	Beaches-East York	
Pupatello, Hon. / L'hon. Sandra (LIB)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	Minister of International Trade and Investment / Ministre du Commerce international et de l'Investissement
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Ramal, Khalil (LIB)	London-Fanshawe	
Ramsay, David (LIB)	Timiskaming-Cochrane	
Rinaldi, Lou (LIB)	Northumberland-Quinte West	
Runciman, Robert W. (PC)	Leeds-Grenville	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle
Ruprecht, Tony (LIB)	Davenport	
Sandals, Liz (LIB)	Guelph	
Savoline, Joyce (PC)	Burlington	
Sergio, Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	
Shurman, Peter (PC)	Thornhill	
Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Monique M. (LIB)	Nipissing	Minister of Tourism / Ministre du Tourisme Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement Deputy Premier / Vice-premier ministre Minister of Energy and Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Énergie et de l'Infrastructure
Smitherman, Hon. / L'hon. George (LIB)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	
Sorbara, Greg (LIB)	Vaughan	
Sousa, Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	
Sterling, Norman W. (PC)	Carleton-Mississippi Mills	
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto-Danforth	Deputy Third Party House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de parti reconnu
Takhar, Hon. / L'hon. Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga-Erindale	Minister of Small Business and Consumer Services / Ministre des Petites Entreprises et des Services aux consommateurs
Van Bommel, Maria (LIB)	Lambton-Kent-Middlesex	
Watson, Hon. / L'hon. Jim (LIB)	Ottawa West-Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest-Nepean	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Wilkinson, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Perth-Wellington	Minister of Research and Innovation / Ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe-Grey	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Witmer, Elizabeth (PC)	Kitchener-Waterloo	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke	
Zimmer, David (LIB)	Willowdale	

**STANDING AND SELECT COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
COMITÉS PERMANENTS ET SPÉCIAUX DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE**

Standing Committee on Estimates / Comité permanent des budgets des dépenses

Chair / Président: Tim Hudak
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Garfield Dunlop
Gilles Bisson, Bob Delaney
Garfield Dunlop, Kevin Daniel Flynn
Tim Hudak, Amrit Mangat
Phil McNeely, Yasir Naqvi
John O'Toole
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przedziecki

**Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs /
Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques**

Chair / Président: Pat Hoy
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Jean-Marc Lalonde
Sophia Aggelonitis, Ted Arnott
Wayne Arthurs, Toby Barrett
Pat Hoy, Jean-Marc Lalonde
Leeanna Pendergast, Michael Prue
Charles Sousa
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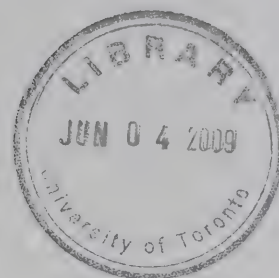
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Monday 25 May 2009

Lundi 25 mai 2009

Speaker
Honourable Steve Peters

Président
L'honorable Steve Peters

Clerk
Deborah Deller

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 25 May 2009

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 25 mai 2009

The House met at 1030.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Good morning. Please remain standing for the Lord's Prayer, followed by the Islamic prayer.

Prayers.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Robert Bailey: It's a great pleasure for me to introduce two visitors in the west gallery: my son, Rodney Bailey, and his good friend David French, from Woodstock and Waterloo.

Mr. Jim Brownell: I would like to introduce two friends of mine: Grant Bridge, from Pickering, and his son-in-law, Ross Fair, from Toronto.

Hon. John Wilkinson: Good morning, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce my good friend and constituent Jeff Brick, who is with the Upper Thames River Conservation Authority and who is visiting us today.

Hon. John Gerretsen: Today I would like to introduce two additional Ministers of the Environment who are joining us today. They're winners of contests that were held at the Green Living Show and at the Ontario Science Centre. They are: Meaghan Evon, a grade 5 student at Frère André elementary school in Barrie, who is here with her father, Russell Evon; and Daniel Wiseman, a grade 7 student at the Junior Academy school here in Toronto, who is here with his father, Greg Wiseman.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: It is my pleasure to introduce Hilary, Heather, Sarah and Michael Craggs. They were the successful bidders of a lunch and tour of Queen's Park. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: I'm pleased to introduce, from the Coalition to Save Our Young Adults, Durhane Wong-Rieger from the Anemia Institute; Riyadh Elbard from the Thalassemia Foundation of Canada; Sherman Moore from the Sickie Cell Association of Ontario, and Bessie Calabria.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: On Thursday, May 14, I rose in the House in response to a question from the member from Wellington-Halton Hills, asking me about regional planning and tourism. I mistakenly said that we had done consultations in Sudbury and Fort Frances when in fact we have done consultations in Kenora, Thunder Bay, Sault Ste Marie, Timmins and North Bay, among other communities across the province.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): On behalf of the member from Haldimand-Norfolk and page Eileen Woolley, we'd like to welcome her mother, Josefina, and her father, Patrick, sitting in the members' gallery today. Welcome to Queen's Park.

On behalf of the member from Timmins-James Bay and page Kathleen Crump, we'd like to welcome her grandmother Linda Burke, sitting in the members' gallery today.

I also want to take this opportunity to welcome a guest of mine, who will be joining us in the Speaker's gallery, Andrew Gunn.

We have with us in the Speaker's gallery today a delegation from the state Legislature of Baden-Württemberg, Germany, led by the Honourable Professor Peter Frankenberg, Minister of Science, Research and the Arts. He is joined by Mrs. Innes Busch and Dr. Frithjof Staib. The delegation is accompanied by German and Canadian consular staff Mrs. Catrin Stibbe and Mr. Theo Schweiker.

Please join me in welcoming our guests to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario today.

ORAL QUESTIONS

MINISTER'S RESIGNATION

Mr. Frank Klees: My question is to the Premier, and it relates to the resignation of his Minister of Economic Development.

Surely there can't be a bigger blow to this Premier and his government than to have the minister responsible for Ontario's economic recovery abandon his post at a time of serious economic disaster in this province.

Can the Premier help us understand this: How is it that his senior minister responsible for economic development feels that he can do more good for the province of Ontario and economic development by taking a job with the city of Toronto than as head of economic development for the province of Ontario?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I appreciate the opportunity to speak to the issue, and I want to begin by simply, on behalf of all Ontarians, thanking Minister Bryant for 10 years of unrelenting commitment to public service in the province of Ontario.

I am sorry to lose Minister Bryant, but here's the upside: The most significant urban economic centre in the province of Ontario and indeed in the country, by far, is the city of Toronto. If Minister Bryant can help get the

city of Toronto, firing on all cylinders, that will not only benefit the people of Toronto, it will benefit the people of Ontario and indeed the people of Canada.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Frank Klees: There can be no clearer evidence that confusion reigns at the very top of this government and that the Premier has lost the confidence not only of this minister, but of the rest of his ministers and his caucus.

The senior minister charged with leading this province's economic recovery walks out, and he leaves at the start of a crucial week of negotiations, when billions of dollars of government loans are on the table with the auto sector. He leaves, saying, "I'm excited to begin new duties with Invest Toronto...."

There's much more to this than Mr. Bryant being excited about a job in Toronto.

Will the Premier admit that the real reason for his minister's resignation is that he has lost the confidence of this minister and that there are many other ministers who have also lost confidence in this Premier's leadership?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, I want to congratulate Minister Bryant for the work that he has done for Ontario families and the fight that he has fought on behalf of Ontario businesses.

When it comes to the auto issue in particular, I know that all members of this Legislature remain very committed to doing what we can and playing our part, as part of a triumvirate of Washington being actively involved in this, Ottawa—the federal government here—as well as Queen's Park, to see what we can do together to put the sector, but particularly GM at this point in time, on a solid footing.

I take the opportunity, as well, to congratulate CAW members who for the third time, if you can believe it, in the past year have negotiated a new agreement with their employer, GM. I think they've come to the table in a meaningful way, and now it's time for the government to see what we can do to put GM on a solid footing.

1040

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Mr. Frank Klees: Here is what we've heard and what the media is beginning to report: that the next minister to leave is the Minister of Energy and Infrastructure, and that many backbenchers have lost confidence in this Premier's leadership. What apparently has undermined the confidence of the entire Liberal caucus is the growing arrogance on the part of this Premier in not listening either to them or to constituents who are warning this government against the imposition of billions of dollars of new taxes under the HST.

Will the Premier acknowledge that he is facing stiff opposition for his proposed HST from his ministers, his caucus and in fact from all Ontarians, and will he agree today to back down on that untimely imposition of \$2.5 billion of additional taxes on the people of Ontario?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: My honourable colleague will know that many, if not all, in his caucus are in fact

fully supportive of the direction we are pursuing in our budget. He understands it is important that we find a way to tackle this challenge.

I'm reminded of something that that great Canadian economist, John Kenneth Galbraith, adviser to at least half a dozen American presidents, once said. He said that leadership demands that we unequivocally confront the great anxiety of our age. The great anxiety of our age is economic in nature. Our budget is determined to confront that unequivocally in a way that may not be easy but in a way that is absolutely essential, and we are convinced that not only businesses but Ontario families believe that.

TAXATION

Mr. Frank Klees: To the Premier: The great anxiety of our age is the lack of leadership on the part of this government during the worst economic recession in the history of this province. That is the anxiety.

I stood in this place months before the last budget and called on the Premier not to proceed with his musing about an HST. He chose not to listen. Now he is hearing not only from his caucus but his ministers and people from across the province about the harm that HST will do.

I'm asking the Premier one more time: In the face of all the evidence, of all the pain this tax will impose on Ontarians—individual families as well as businesses—will he agree to stop this nonsense in its track and withhold the implementation of the HST? Will he do that?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: We will not shrink from leading. I know that my honourable colleague is afraid of this particular policy. I believe that in his heart of hearts he knows it is the right policy for Ontario.

It's time for us to do what is necessary to ensure that we level the playing field for Ontario businesses. One hundred and thirty other countries and four other provinces already give their businesses an advantage over ours. It's time for us to ensure that we support our businesses, and especially our struggling manufacturers, where we have lost so many jobs, to put them on a solid footing going forward and to ensure that they are more competitive and can create more jobs for us today and for our children tomorrow.

It demands that we do something today that is not necessarily easy, but my honourable colleague knows it is the right thing to do for Ontarians today and tomorrow.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Frank Klees: The Premier need not put any words in my mouth. It is not the right thing to do, and the evidence is mounting every day. And if he doesn't want to listen to us, what he should do is listen to his backbenchers and his ministers, who we understand have told him it is the wrong thing to do, at the wrong time. What he needs to do is listen to the people of Ontario.

I'm going to ask the Premier this one question: Does he know what the impact of the HST will be to common fees for people living in condominiums in this province? Will he answer that question? Does he know that?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: My honourable colleagues sitting opposite have several times made reference to Roger Martin, a reputable authority when it comes to these things. This is what he had to say about our recent budget: "The recent Ontario budget represents an exceedingly important step forward with its bold tax measures that will benefit all Ontarians. Businesses, consumers and families should be delighted with the leadership this government has shown." He concluded by saying, "Many argue that governments can't be bold; can't do the right thing because it isn't politically saleable. This government, with this budget, shows that to be the view of defeatists. Congratulations."

We're moving forward. We know it's the right thing to do, and we're doing it in a way that protects Ontario families, 93% of whom are getting a permanent tax cut.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Mr. Frank Klees: It is not the right thing to do, and the Premier can read as many articles as he likes. What I would ask him to do is to look into the faces of the people of Ontario and tell them that he does not care how someone on a fixed income, how seniors in this province, how the unemployed are going to cope with the 13% tax on products and services—thousands of them—that have never been taxed before.

The issue is this: It is the wrong time, in the history of this province, when we are experiencing the most difficult economic times, people are losing their jobs, and this Premier has the gall to stand up and say a tax increase is the right thing to do. He has lost touch with the people of Ontario. I'm asking him one more time: Will he at least familiarize himself with what the impact of his HST will be on average Ontarians in this province?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I think that with the passage of time, Ontarians have come to understand the values that inform our thinking and inspire our efforts. They know that during the course of the past five or six years now, we have devoted ourselves to improving the quality of education for all of our kids. We have devoted ourselves to improving the quality of health care for all of our families. We have made some remarkable progress in terms of protecting the quality of our natural environment, and we've worked hard as well to improve business opportunities to ensure that we have jobs for our kids in the province of Ontario. I think they have a good understanding of where we are coming from and the values that inform us.

So I welcome this debate. I believe it is just beginning. My friends opposite say that we should freeze, that we should do nothing, that we should wait for this recession to roll by, that everything will come back to the way it was. We don't believe that. We think the times call for leadership. It's not an easy thing to do. Ontarians know what we want to do for them, and we'll keep doing it.

PENSION PLANS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Premier. After more than five years of McGuinty governance,

Ontario's workplace-based pension system is in crisis. Last month, the McGuinty government introduced legislation that completely absolves the province of any legal obligation to backstop the pension benefits guarantee fund in this province. But on May 16, in Windsor, the finance minister announced that he will be introducing legislation to overhaul the broken pension benefits guarantee fund. Will this government introduce legislation in the fall that will ensure that every single pensioner gets every last penny that they are owed?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I appreciate the question and I'd like to think that in Ontario, all of us together, in this House and outside, are beginning to engage Canadians in an important national conversation. The fact of the matter is that we are on a collision course when it comes to an insecurity for seniors who, in their retirement years, have inadequate levels of income. Only one third of Ontarians have the benefit of a defined benefit pension fund, and there's more to be done in this regard. That's why on this very day the Minister of Finance, Minister Duncan, is meeting with his counterparts from across the country, and Minister Flaherty as well, to engage Canadians in a national conversation. I have personally asked Prime Minister Harper to host a national summit so that we can begin, together, to put in place the kinds of measures that will ensure that our seniors will enjoy a decent retirement income.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Not only is the existing pension system in crisis but there is also the ongoing crisis of those who have no pension coverage at all. I would agree with the Premier in that regard. Only one third of Ontario workers actually have a workplace pension plan. But in BC, Alberta and Saskatchewan they are already moving forward on provincial pension plans, and pensions will figure prominently, as the Premier has already indicated, in the finance ministers' meeting today.

New Democrats believe that now is the time for an Ontario pension plan. What does this government intend to do for the two thirds of Ontarians who do not have a pension plan?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: The Minister of Finance has just recently indicated that, failing action on the part of the federal government, it's something we're prepared to consider undertaking on our own. I know that my colleagues in Alberta and BC, in particular, have mused about moving ahead, but I think there's a fairly strong consensus among the Premiers, although I have yet to raise this with all of them, that we need to move forward nationally. This is as important an issue as our national medicare system, as our national employment insurance system, making sure that all Canadians can enjoy a decent level of income benefit in their retirement years. We think it's the kind of thing—it might be that we can proceed here in Ontario, but that's not particularly of value to seniors living in Nova Scotia, or seniors living in Newfoundland or seniors living in Manitoba. We think it's important for us to move forward on a national basis, and that's our purpose at this point in time.

1050

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The last time I checked, this is the Premier of Ontario, and it's Ontario workers whom we have to think about in terms of their pension plans. I take it from the answer that on this important day of the finance ministers' meeting, the government has absolutely no idea how to expand pension benefit coverage in this province.

New Democrats believe that every single worker in Ontario should be covered by a workplace pension plan. New Democrats believe there are very concrete things that can be done to expand coverage in Ontario. There is no time to wait.

When will this government support the creation of an Ontario pension plan so that all Ontarians can look forward to retiring with dignity and with quality of life?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: We think that sometimes there are challenges that are so great that the best way to approach them is for all of us to tackle them together. I believe that's the nature of the challenge that is before us now when it comes to considering that about two thirds of Canadians in their retirement years will not enjoy a decent level of income. We think that's a national challenge that demands a national response, and that's why Minister Duncan is—at this very moment, I believe—engaging his counterparts from across the country in a new dialogue.

I understand my colleague's impatience. In the face of failure in Ottawa to move forward, obviously the ball will be thrown back to the provinces, for us to see what we might do. But I believe that at this point in time there in fact is a genuine interest on the part of the Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance for the government of Canada.

NUCLEAR ENERGY

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Premier. Last Thursday, the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services urged Sudbury city council to veto the storage of radioactive nuclear waste in its community. He said, "There is no dollar figure, no salary, and no number of jobs that would be worth risking the health of our children, our landscape and our future."

Does this Premier agree with his minister that radioactive waste from nuclear plants poses a serious threat to the health of future generations?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Of course there are real dangers associated with radioactive waste. Of course it's something with which we have to grapple as a society. But fortunately, there are some very strong rules and regulations in place, put there by the federal government. The upside to dealing with nuclear waste is that we know how to contain it and we know how to store it. We understand, if we are honest about it, that we are foisting this responsibility on our great-great-great-grandchildren. We understand that, but the good news is that

we know how to contain it and we know how to store it—unlike carbon dioxide emissions coming from coal-fired generators, for example, where there is no technology in place, where there is no science in place that would have us embrace some kind of technology to store that. That's why we've chosen to proceed with more nuclear energy.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: It's truly unfortunate that the Premier still won't come clean and admit that there is no safe way to isolate radioactive nuclear waste for hundreds of generations. Even the industry-run Nuclear Waste Management Organization admits that it is impossible to prove that underground storage is safe. For years, the McGuinty government has misled Ontarians about nuclear power—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I ask the honourable member to withdraw the comment.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I withdraw, Speaker.

For years, the McGuinty government has downplayed the risks to Ontarians about nuclear power, claiming it is safe, emissions-free and affordable. When will the Premier tell Ontarians the real truth about nuclear power: that it is expensive, it is dangerous and it is the wrong way to invest up to \$50 billion of taxpayers' money?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: The Minister of Energy and Infrastructure.

Hon. George Smitherman: I would encourage the honourable member to visit our facilities in the province of Ontario, where that nuclear waste which has been created through Ontario's nuclear power generation over the past several decades is well stored.

Everybody agrees that this is an issue that really does ask of all of us to ensure that we get it right and that we work within the available science to make those decisions, and that's why there's such an engaged discussion on this point.

But I would want to extend an opportunity to the leader of the third party to visit facilities where this product is contained at the moment, as I'm sure it would assist her awareness of the practices that are involved in this safe storage of product that has developed in the province of Ontario to date.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The government says it has a mandate to build nuclear power plants in this province, but building nuclear power plants was not part of their 2007 election platform. The government says that new nuclear plants are the only way to keep the lights on, but David Suzuki and others have shown that that is untrue.

Today, the Ontario Clean Air Alliance reports that Ontario can meet its electricity needs more cheaply by connecting to hydro power from Quebec and from Labrador, much more cheaply than by building new nuclear power plants. Why won't this Premier choose job-producing energy conservation and renewable energy projects instead of expensive and unsafe nuclear power?

Hon. George Smitherman: Firstly, the honourable member uses the tactic of that word that was in her

earlier question and wasn't appropriate. In the 2007 election, all—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I just remind the honourable member that you can't say indirectly what you want to say directly.

Hon. George Smitherman: I apologize. I didn't have a script to work with.

On the matter at hand, this was clearly part of the context of the 2007 election. People in Ontario had the opportunity—in the best way that we know, through democratic means—to voice their views with respect to Ontario's future energy supply. But in this very House, recently, we passed the Green Energy Act. This will enable substantially more renewable energy to come to life and will add \$900 million to the already allocated \$1.2 billion for conservation initiatives.

We all agree that there are opportunities to take the lead of the member from Pembroke in reducing—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

FIREFIGHTERS

Mr. Ted Arnott: My question is for the Minister of Labour. For more than two years, the government has led Ontario's volunteer firefighters to believe that they will be included under the presumptive legislation, just as full-time firefighters are. My Bill 169 would have done just that. Why, then, did the government force its members to vote against Bill 169?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: Our government recognizes the life-threatening, hazardous type of work that our firefighters do, and we have taken steps to ensure that firefighters and their families are given the dignity and respect that they deserve.

The consultations that have come about since 2007, as the member mentioned, when we brought forward presumptive legislation to work with firefighter stakeholders, are ongoing. We continue to meet with AMO; we continue to meet with the fire chiefs. Actually, two weeks ago, I had some good discussions with the fire chiefs of Ontario.

What I can say to the member and to any firefighter in Ontario: if, for whatever reason, they feel ill, they can take their concerns to the WSIB and those concerns will be taken very seriously and treated like other claims.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Ted Arnott: We've been hearing those excuses now for two years. What we need now is action.

I can't believe that some government members need to be reminded that the second reading vote of any bill is a vote on the principle of that bill. How can they say they're in favour in the principle when they vote against the principle?

This is an affront not only to volunteer firefighters, but also to rural and small-town Ontario, and we can't imagine how disappointing this must be to the family of the late Stittsville firefighter Alex MacDonald, who died of leukemia just over a year ago. Had he been a full-time

firefighter, he would have been covered under Bill 221 and the accompanying regulations.

Will the minister commit to immediately extending the presumptive legislation to the volunteer fire service, or will he now admit that this is yet another McGuinty Liberal broken promise?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: What I can commit to the member is that we will continue to have consultations with our firefighter stakeholders. As early as a couple weeks ago, when I met with the fire chiefs of Ontario, I did say to that forum that this is a very active file in the Ministry of Labour.

We continue to work with the WSIB, we continue to work with AMO, to look at how the regulation that is in place was put in place two years ago when we brought forward presumptive legislation to address firefighters and to ensure that their work, their lives are treated with dignity and respect. That's what we will continue to do.

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NUCLEAR WASTE

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour le ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels. Last week, the minister stood up before his Sudbury constituents and urged them not to accept nuclear waste in their community because doing so would threaten the health of children and the environment. The minister's strong stand came as a bit of a surprise, but it is very welcome. It's a welcome change to hear the minister speak about the health risks of nuclear waste.

After hearing the Premier's answer to my leader's question, my question is simple: In Sudbury, the minister says no to nuclear waste, but what does he say at the cabinet table?

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: Let me answer the question by simply saying that, unlike the member from Nickel Belt, I will stand up for my constituency at all times. Unlike the member for Nickel Belt, who follows, I will ensure that the views of my constituents are always articulated, be it in my riding, at the caucus table, the cabinet table or in this House. I understand, unlike that member, that my job, first and foremost, is always to support and ensure that the views of my constituents are made loud and clear around any table.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

M^{me} France Gélinas: We know that it is not safe for Sudbury to have nuclear waste. Governments around the world are finding that, despite offers of jobs and money, citizens are not willing to accept the health risks of storing radioactive nuclear waste in their community. I was happy to see that the member from Sudbury urged Sudbury council to pass a motion so that there would be no nuclear waste stored in Sudbury.

When is he going to ask his government to do the same and pass a motion that there will be no nuclear waste buried in Sudbury, and an engagement on behalf of his government to do just that?

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: I continue to reinforce the fact that, unlike the member from Nickel Belt, I will stand

and always ensure that the views of my constituents are made known. Unlike the member from Nickel Belt, I will ensure that I stand up and support the people I represent. And unlike the member from Nickel Belt, I will always ensure that at whatever table or in whatever—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Minister?

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: Whatever the table, whatever the forum, I will always stand up for the people of my community, because my job is to ensure that I support and represent their views. I never make an apology for that, unlike the member from Nickel Belt.

SCHOOL FACILITIES

Mr. Mario Sergio: My question is to the Minister of Energy and Infrastructure. Minister, last week was Energy Conservation Week, and I had the opportunity to join you at St. Basil-The-Great College School in my riding of York West. It was here that you announced an investment of \$50 million for public school boards to reduce energy costs in schools. St Basil's principal, Carmine Settino, and his dedicated staff have spearheaded the student eco-club green campaign. It was inspiring to hear the students speak so passionately about their green school initiatives: their wind projects, solar panels and strategic landscaping. They are a shining example of how a school and its students can indeed lead by example.

Minister, how is this funding going to help schools? Is it something they have been asking for?

Hon. George Smitherman: I really did enjoy the chance to be in York West with the honourable member at St. Basil-The-Great, especially to meet the student council leadership and the leadership from the eco-club. They were very, very impressive indeed. That's a school where they've installed solar array and where they're very interested in doing more. That's why our \$50-million program will support school boards to install more renewable energy technology in the form of small-scale wind, solar-related products and also geothermal.

Ontario's elementary and secondary schools have significant energy costs, at nearly half a billion dollars a year. So here we have an opportunity to reduce both the carbon footprint of our schools and also reduce their operating costs, which means that those important dollars can be more targeted at student needs. We also know that it's an opportunity for young folks to learn more about the opportunities through these technologies that are operating right in their schools.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Mario Sergio: I think this funding will certainly help schools add renewable energy technology, and I'm confident that many schools in my riding will want to participate.

I have heard from my local boards about the interest in finding ways to green our schools and reduce their operating costs at the same time. I was very interested to hear about the announcement that you and the Premier made a few weeks ago about funding for schools to make energy-

efficient upgrades to their facilities. Can you, Minister, advise this House about how the school boards in my riding can get more information about the program and how it works?

Hon. George Smitherman: I do want to thank the hard-working member from York West for the question. I do want to be very clear, though: It was the Minister of Education and the Premier who were able to launch this incredibly important initiative that will see \$550 million invested in the next two years in continuing to retrofit schools in the province of Ontario.

As I mentioned before, they have half a billion dollars a year in annual operating costs associated with energy, and we think that there are incredible opportunities here to make those kinds of investments. More than 1,000 publicly funded schools will be made more energy-efficient to enhance the places to learn and help boards save both energy and money, but this is also part of our stimulative focus from the government's budget. This will also lead to 5,500 person-years of employment, an important boost to local economies, while reducing electricity costs and our carbon footprint.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: My question is for the Minister of Health. Today the Coalition to Save Our Young Adults held a press conference calling on your government to deal with the critical lack of support for young adults with thalassemia and sickle cell disease. As you know, the program at Toronto General has been limited to 99 adults for 10 years, and there are now 150 young adults with complex disorders who must go to Sick Kids for transfusions, but they don't receive adult services.

Now, you promised in 2004 that you would provide quality care to these individuals. However, according to the coalition, "Nothing has changed. In the words of one physician, the situation has gone from 'crisis' to 'near catastrophe.'" Will you, today, immediately live up to your promise to provide the needed resources?

Hon. David Caplan: I want to thank the member for the question. I want to thank the advocates who are here today who are sickle cell and thalassemia advocates. I want all the members of this Legislature to know that I'm concerned for the health of all children and young adults with sickle cell disease and with thalassemia. We've asked the local health integration networks to work with hospitals to develop solutions to implement to treat this and many, many other disorders.

We're continuing to work to increase funding and resources to our hospital sector. For example, our 2009 budget commits to providing hospitals a \$617-million funding increase this year over last. That's a 4.7% increase at a time when our economy, as we well know, is very challenged and shrinking. This new funding includes a 2.1% base funding increase to all Ontario hospitals. We've invested \$2 million in 2008-09—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: I go back to the Minister of Health. Minister, your response shows your total lack of understanding for these young adults with thalassemia and sickle cell disease. Your government, in 2004, promised them care; it's now 2009. Don't tell us about increases to the hospital budget; these are real people. In fact, 15 of them have died in recent years of preventable causes because of the lack of human health resources.

I say to you today, Minister, will you, in 2009, live up to your 2004 promise and provide the needed human and financial resources to properly look after these young adults who have nowhere to go?

Hon. David Caplan: I think the member raises an important point in this House. It's also important to recognize that funding for hospitals where this treatment and where the care for these young adults and children is provided is in our health care system, and that funding is in fact increasing. For example, we've invested \$2 million in 2008-09 to fund Ontario hospitals for selected drugs used in outpatient treatment of thalassemia through the special drug program. New products for treatment, for example, of thalassemia and sickle cell disease are funded through the Ontario drug benefit program, subject, of course, to the review process.

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I'm determined to provide quality care to all individuals in the province of Ontario. I think that the advocates who are here should understand that the member opposite and her party advocate a \$3-billion cut to health care through the elimination of Ontario's health premium. The record on this side of the House is one where we are rebuilding health care after—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

ARTS AND CULTURAL FUNDING

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I have a question for the Minister of Culture. In the 2008 budget, the McGuinty Liberals announced that they were making permanent the sales tax exemption on tickets to live theatre. In the 2009 budget, the McGuinty government indicated that the new harmonized sales tax would put an end to that exemption. So much for "permanent." How is slapping an 8% tax on live theatre going to help the thousands of Ontario actors, performers, musicians and crew?

Hon. M. Aileen Carroll: That initiative, along with all of the other initiatives in bringing in the tax incentives that were built into our budget, is exactly the right move that this government should have taken.

Interjection: What tax incentives?

Hon. M. Aileen Carroll: My apologies; "incentives" is not the right word.

We have brought in sales tax harmonization. We have done that because it is exactly the right thing to do. It is the right thing to stimulate the private sector. It is what the private sector asked of this government. It's part of a very courageous budget, one that I'm very proud to support. It's a budget that's aimed at restructuring an economy, and the creative industries are a very big part of that economy.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I have to say, I haven't heard from any non-profit theatre groups that are enthused about this—none. Slapping an 8% tax on Ontarians who are going to plays will only further burden the arts community, which is struggling through the impact of the recession. Talk to people at Shaw; talk to people at Stratford. Stopping mounting job losses has to be a central concern for your government. What are you going to do, Minister, to alleviate the impact of this 8% burden on live performers in this province?

Hon. M. Aileen Carroll: We have taken bold action to bring this economy out of this recession, and in doing that, we have saved businesses throughout this economy \$500 million just in the paperwork.

Interjections.

Hon. M. Aileen Carroll: If the honourable members would like to listen, I would like to assure them that, largely, I have heard nothing but kudos from the creative sector, from the people who are doing live theatre and from art galleries and museums. Why am I hearing those kudos? It is because the budget of our government, this time and last year, was hugely supportive of all that's being done in the creative sector. We have put millions of dollars into our cultural centres. We have, as a result, been thanked and told that, as a government, no government gets it better than the McGuinty government when it comes to—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

SENIOR CITIZENS

Mr. Phil McNeely: My question is for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Our seniors face some complex health care challenges. I know many of the constituents in Ottawa, particularly those in the senior community, want access to support services at home, where they are most comfortable. Providing these services benefits seniors. It also benefits our hospitals: By giving seniors care at home or in the community, these programs will help us reduce ER wait times. What is the government doing to ensure that there are more home and community supports for Ontario seniors?

Hon. David Caplan: I want to thank the member from Ottawa-Orléans for the question, because indeed we are committed to ensuring that Ontario seniors get the health support they need at home and in the community.

That's why last week our government announced a further investment of over \$187 million in our aging at home program. The program encourages innovation at a local level by giving local health integration networks the flexibility to start some creative projects that are tailor made for seniors living in communities with specific needs. To date, more than 230 new projects have been approved. I know they will benefit communities right across the province by helping seniors stay at home, and by ensuring that our alternate-level-of-care, or ALC, patients can leave hospital sooner and recover where they're most comfortable. This leaves more beds for

emergency room patients waiting to be admitted to hospitals. This helps our government move forward with one of our most important priorities, reducing wait times—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Phil McNeely: My constituents will be glad to hear that you're implementing a strategy to help seniors live independently at home or in their communities.

I know the Champlain Local Health Integration Network received over \$17 million in funding for the aging-at-home initiative. The money will help increase the range and quantity of services available to seniors in my community and help relieve pressures in hospitals and long-term-care homes. But I want to know more about what this program will mean for individual constituents.

Hon. David Caplan: It's a good question, because last week I was in Ottawa with the member and we met a remarkable Ottawa woman named Geraldine, who has benefited tremendously from aging at home. Geraldine had been courageously battling breast cancer, and her husband, Gerald, had recently suffered a heart attack. When Geraldine found out she needed surgery, the couple worried that they would not be able to care for one another. But Geraldine got help from an innovative aging-at-home project called Aging in Place, which has been a great success in the Champlain Local Health Integration Network. Through this program, Geraldine was able to recover at home with the help of nurses and personal support workers. She didn't have to worry. She called it a godsend. Talking about this experience, Geraldine said, "The help is there. All you have to do is ask."

I'm proud to provide seniors like Geraldine with this support. We're giving them the care they need at home, where they want to be.

CONSUMER PROTECTION

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: My question is for the Premier. Tomorrow, the insurance brokers are coming to Queen's Park. I've met, as all members have, with constituents, brokers and individuals from the Insurance Bureau of Canada. The concern is that postal codes and/or credit scoring are being used to deny people insurance and/or for determining insurance. For those who don't understand, it's determined by how much credit you owe on your credit cards or how many mortgages you have for credit scoring.

This is not allowed for auto insurance, but what's taking place is that individuals who are applying for household insurance are asked to provide their credit score to determine household insurance, and when they deny access to insurance company providers, they're being denied auto insurance. What are you going to do to ensure that you can protect Ontarians from credit scoring determining people's insurance rates?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I thank the honourable member for his question. One of the things I want to make clear is that credit information is not permitted for use in rating and underwriting auto insurance. FSCO, the Financial Services Commission of Ontario, sent a

bulletin on February 10 of this year outlining acceptable practices for insurers who quote on auto insurance in Ontario.

My colleague also makes reference to another issue, and that is whether or not insurance companies in the province of Ontario are using credit scoring to grant household insurance. What FSCO is doing at the present is conducting a survey—as are their counterparts, I think, pretty well in all the other provinces and territories at the same time—so that we get a better understanding of what's happening in the marketplace, with a view to then considering what, if any, action would be necessary in that regard.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary.

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: Right now, as you mentioned, there are 39 recommendations under consideration by FSCO's five-year review for auto insurance. There is a gap under current legislation that doesn't allow the superintendent responsible for insuring people in the province to ensure that the rules are followed. Recommendation number 7 says that FSCO needs stronger authority to prohibit "objectionable quoting practices," but it's being ignored.

Premier, what is it that you and your government are going to do to ensure that the policies in the province are not based on credit scoring?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I think we've made some real progress during the course of the past five years when it comes to insurance generally speaking, particularly in the area of auto, where rates have dropped over 7% since 2003, which has been a real boon to consumers.

Again, my honourable colleague raises a real issue about the use of credit scoring in the granting of insurance. I know that's something that FSCO and the Minister of Finance continue to consider. What I do undertake to my honourable colleague is to get back to him if there are any more specifics I can provide in this regard, given the absence of the Minister of Finance today.

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STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

Mr. Rosario Marchese: My question is to the Minister of Education. Minister, it has now been more than a month since you introduced your school information-finder website. This site facilitates the comparison of schools based on the income and education of the parents, along with the language spoken and the length of time the student has been in Canada.

You have a reputation for collaboration, yet at a recent partnership table meeting, all education stakeholders, including parents, deans of faculties of education, directors of education, trustees and teachers, stood united and stated their adamant opposition to this site directly to the Minister of Education.

When you set up this site, who exactly were you collaborating with?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: There actually were many conversations with various education stakeholders. I had, in fact, talked to the partnership table—

Mr. Howard Hampton: Name one.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Well, everyone who sat at the partnership table knew that we were going to be using the data that we have been collecting, as part of our statistical neighbours exercise, to work with schools at risk. We were going to be using the data to allow parents and the community to have more information.

The other thing I did at the partnership table meeting that the member opposite notes is that I endeavoured, undertook, to set up a working table, a round table discussion, so that we can talk about exactly what other information we might need to put on the school information finder to flesh out those profiles of schools so that parents and community members can get the information they want. Those letters and those invitations to that round table will be going out shortly.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: The stakeholders knew you were going to do this, but they are adamantly opposed to it. It appears that you and the Premier are alone in this regard.

The list of stakeholders opposed to the demographic information on this site is truly impressive: People for Education, Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario, Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association, Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation, Ontario Public School Boards' Association and the Ottawa district school board, just to name a few. You get the picture, right?

Minister, no one can figure it out. Why do you insist on leaving this kind of information on the website when everyone is opposed to it?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: You know, it's interesting: All of those groups, with whom I converse regularly and who have been enormously supportive of our initiatives, are also very opposed to the kind of narrow information that the C.D. Howe Institute or the Fraser Institute put out when they rank schools.

Our initiative is intended to give people fuller information—every one of those people, including many conversations with People for Education. We are committed to continuing this conversation. As I said to the member opposite, I told the partnership table that we will have a round table, we will continue—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Minister?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I am going to maintain our reputation as a collaborative government that understands that when there's a concern, when there's a disagreement among people who are working together, we need to have that conversation, because that's how we get to the right answer. Those notices, those letters will be going out, inviting that conversation from all of those stakeholders.

FOOD SAFETY

Mr. Pat Hoy: My question is to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. I've always been con-

cerned about food safety and making sure that Ontarians have the proper information to make an informed decision. We know that Ontarians demand high-quality food and that they want to buy local, not just because they want to support our Ontario farmers but because Ontarians grow the best food in the world—like those in Chatham, Kent, Essex and Leamington. They want increased sustainability as well as to lower their carbon footprint.

Being able to track where our food comes from is vitally important so that consumers can make informed choices on what food they buy when they are at the grocery store. My question to the minister is, what is your ministry doing in order to help consumers track where their food actually comes from?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: I'm very happy to have the opportunity to say that our government has been working very closely with producers, with food processors and with the federal government. We have listened, and I think that it has been very good news. Last week—actually it was May 11—in Guelph I was able to announce the launch of the food safety and traceability initiative. This is part of our Growing Forward agreement with the federal government, and together we have committed to support the traceability initiatives in this province. It is a four-year, \$25.5-million joint investment to help Ontario producers and processors with traceability initiatives. The food safety and traceability initiative provides cost-share funding, up to \$20,000 to individual facilities, to support the implementation of food—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Pat Hoy: Currently, Ontario farmers face many challenges. We know there has been significant investment in Ontario farms to ensure that they continue to thrive and grow. For instance, I look at the action the government is taking on expanding the Foodland Ontario program as being very positive news for our food producers and food processors. Our government must partner with our agri-food sector not only to help promote local food products but also to invest in food safety initiatives, both on-farm and in the processing sector, to ensure that Ontario families enjoy safe food from farm to fork.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister: Could she tell us more about how this new program will help our Ontario farmers continue to succeed?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: Well, promoting Ontario's quality food and supporting food safety initiatives really do go hand in hand. We have listened to farmers, to processors, and this is what they told us they need. This will increase food producer and processor awareness of food safety risks and benefits implementing food safety practices, because the people of Ontario expect the safest and best-quality food. This program is designed to assist both producers and processors implement practices in their operations so that they can continue to present, not just to the people of Ontario but indeed to the world, that we have the very best food right here in Ontario. It's grown here and it's produced here.

ADOPTION DISCLOSURE

Ms. Sylvia Jones: My question is for the Minister of Community and Social Services. Minister, the June 1 deadline for the adoption disclosure vetoes is one week away. Can the minister share with the House how many veto applications have been received asking that the personal information be blocked from the adoption registry and whether those veto submissions have been registered?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: I'm very pleased about what our government has done about the disclosure of information with regard to past adoptions prior to September 1, 2008. There is a lot of interest from those parents who gave up a child for adoption and for those who want to find their birth parents. We have received quite a bit of information about what the possibilities are if someone doesn't want to have their information disclosed. I have to say that we have quite a few, and in the supplementary I'll give you the right information.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Hope breeds eternal, Minister. I've been approached by an individual who was adopted and whose biological father is serving a life sentence in an Ontario jail. They are very concerned that their personal details could be released to a criminal trying to make contact with them. Your government voted down a Progressive Conservative amendment that would have protected this individual from this exact scenario. This adoptee has been told by your ministry staff that there is a significant backlog in veto applications, and the ministry cannot even confirm receipt of their application.

Minister, will you assure the House today that all veto application files will be cross-referenced and the unprocessed disclosure vetoes processed before you release personal adoptions starting next week?

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Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: I'm just going by memory, but I'll give you the right information about how many veto requests we have received. I can assure you that all veto applications will be processed before any information is provided. I can assure you of that, because it's very important; it's in the legislation. We want to make sure that for those who don't want their identification to be released, it will not be released. There will be other information released, but nothing that will identify who the parents are and where the child is.

ABORIGINAL PROGRAMS
AND SERVICES

Mr. Gilles Bisson: My question is to the Minister of Community Safety. You'll know that on January 8, 2006, a tragic fire in Kashechewan took the lives of both James Goodwin and Ricardo Wesley as a result of them being detained in the jail there that caught fire. They subsequently died because police officers were not able to open up the jail cells. You'll know that the chief coroner came out with his report last week. There are some 90 recommendations about how to deal with this so that this

tragedy doesn't happen again. My question to you is simply this: When do you plan on taking action to implement the coroner's inquest recommendations?

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: I want to thank the member for the question. I also want to reinforce the fact that there were also 46 recommendations from the Ipperwash inquiry. We're going to ensure, as a ministry, that we look at the recommendations from the Ipperwash inquiry. We're going to look at these recommendations very, very seriously. These recommendations—there were 86 recommendations, which dealt with a variety of issues—were made to Canada, to Ontario and to our First Nations partners. We will work closely. Ontario has done its part in the past, and we will continue to do our part in the present and in the future to improve those conditions.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Well, absolutely not: You have not taken your responsibility, and as a result those two men died. So don't come into the House and tell me and the rest of this assembly that you have taken your responsibility. The minister sat with myself, with Chief Stan Beardy, with Chief Jonathan Solomon and with others on this issue on numerous occasions, and you have yet to take up your responsibility of funding your 48%.

So my question to you is: We now have recommendations, the very least of which is to put together a consultation committee that starts by June 30. Are you at least willing to do that, or does it take other deaths in this province for you to take action?

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: The member is dead wrong. Unlike the NDP government between 1990 and 1995, when they cut funding to First Nations policing, when they reduced First Nations police officers, we have doubled funding to the NA police service—doubled. We have added 40 new First Nations police officers as part of the federal funding. We take our role very, very seriously. We will continue the collaboration with our First Nations partners and with the federal government.

The member was also wrong when he said we didn't live up to our commitment of 48% funding—absolutely incorrect; he knows that to be a fact. Let me reinforce to the First Nations communities that Ontario will continue to be a willing partner in this partnership.

RESEARCH AND INNOVATION
IN MISSISSAUGA SOUTH

Mr. Charles Sousa: My question is to the Minister of Research and Innovation. As our economy continues to evolve, employment sectors such as alternative energy, environmental, information and communication technologies will continue to play an increasingly important role in Ontario. Many of my constituents from Mississauga South are currently training at institutions such as Fanshawe, Humber, Sheridan, George Brown and Centennial College. They are part of the Colleges Ontario Network for Industry Innovation. Their goal is to develop projects with small and medium-sized business while providing our students with real-world learning opportunities that

enhance their skills and marketability. What is the Ministry of Research and Innovation doing to ensure that this program can continue to prepare our people and businesses for the jobs of today and tomorrow?

Hon. John Wilkinson: I want to thank my friend from Mississauga South for the question. Three years ago our ministry came up with a new program, called Colleges Ontario Network for Industry Innovation—it's nicknamed CONII. That program has been so very, very successful that in our recent budget, and with great support from my friend the Minister of Small Business and Consumer Services, our ministry was successful in receiving an additional \$10 million, so that we could take this very successful program and ramp it up.

Colleges are uniquely placed to be at that interface between businesses and academia, and so the businesses are able to go to colleges and ask them very specific questions about trying to fix a problem. The kids at the colleges fix that problem, and it's a win-win for everybody.

It's so very, very successful, and I'm so very, very proud that we're actually expanding that program right across Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Charles Sousa: In my riding of Mississauga South, there is a lot of important, exciting work being done to develop green technologies. We are fortunate to have the Ontario Centre for Environmental Technology Advancement, OCETA. It's a not-for-profit organization that helps accelerate the commercialization and market adoption of clean technologies and environmentally sustainable solutions through public engagement and by providing businesses with technical solutions. As well, we're home to the Hydrogen Village project. The goal of the project is to help create a green and sustainable future within the GTA.

What is the Ministry of Research and Innovation doing to support organizations like these as they work toward a greener and more innovative Ontario?

Hon. John Wilkinson: There are some great things going on in Mississauga South. I know that our ministry, over the years, has committed some \$1.4 million to innovative projects in Mississauga South. This funding includes \$118,000 to support Materials and Manufacturing Ontario, in support of their emerging materials network; some \$213,000 for clinical trials at the Trillium Health Centre; \$130,000 in support of the world-famous Hydrogen Village; finally, as well, we've invested some \$1.2 million in the Ontario Centre for Environmental Technology Advancement, which recently provided my ministry with advice on tackling climate change through bio-based, environmental alternative energy and clean technologies.

I know that the good people in Clarkson and in Port Credit and in Lorne Park are very proud of the tremendous environmental track record of our member for Mississauga South, and I look—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. The time for question period has ended.

VISITOR

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd like to take this opportunity to welcome former member Bud Wildman, who represented Algoma in the 30th to the 36th Parliaments. Bud, welcome back to Queen's Park today.

ANSWERS TO WRITTEN QUESTIONS

Mr. Gilles Bisson: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I issued an order paper question, 198, that has not yet been responded to, and I would like to get the government to respond, according to the standing orders, because they're over time.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I thank the member for that point of order. This was an issue that was raised just prior to the recess. I would remind all members, and particularly their legislative assistants, to please review the order papers and ensure that those answers are given in a timely manner.

I trust that the minister responsible for the order paper issue that the member for Timmins-James Bay raised will ensure that that answer is quickly delivered.

BIRTH OF MEMBER'S GRANDCHILD

Mr. David Zimmer: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I'd like to congratulate my colleague Kathleen Wynne on the birth of her first grandchild.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Congratulations.

There being no deferred votes, this House stands recessed until 1 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1138 to 1300.

SIGN LANGUAGE INTERPRETERS

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I believe we have unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding sign language interpreters.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Agreed? Agreed.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I move today that sign language interpreters may be present in the east gallery to interpret the proceedings for guests in the gallery.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

WEARING OF RIBBONS

Mr. Dave Levac: I seek unanimous consent to wear the green ribbon for the anniversary of the green ribbon campaign for today. I believe we have consent. The ribbons will be in each of the galleries for distribution. So I'm seeking unanimous consent to wear it.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Agreed? Agreed.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I want to take this opportunity to welcome a good friend: Hillary Dawson

from the Wine Council of Ontario. Hillary, welcome to the Legislature today.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

CARBON MONOXIDE DETECTORS

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Last year, our community suffered a tragic loss when the Hawkins family succumbed to carbon monoxide poisoning. It was a tragic reminder of the need to have functioning carbon monoxide alarms on every level of your home.

On Friday, May 22, I was pleased to be part of a special event in Woodstock when First Alert Canada donated almost \$2,500 worth of carbon monoxide detectors to Operation Sharing, an organization that helps Oxford's less fortunate.

Operation Sharing helps the people of Oxford through programs like food cards, lunches, providing a place to meet, and counselling. Through this donation, they will also be making sure that people have the security of a carbon monoxide alarm in their home.

I want to thank Jim Rotz, president of Jarden Branded Consumables, and First Alert Canada for their generosity and commitment to safety. Due to their donations, 75 Oxford families will have protection against carbon monoxide poisoning.

Last December, I introduced a private member's bill, the Hawkins Gignac Act, that would give all Ontario families that protection by requiring functioning carbon monoxide detectors in all homes. On April 2, that bill received unanimous support on second reading. I hope the government will take this opportunity to move it forward to committee hearings on third reading to ensure that we can prevent more tragedies. But, as always, I want to encourage everyone not to wait for the legislation before taking steps to protect yourself and your family. Please make sure that you have functioning carbon monoxide detectors in your home.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for allowing me to bring this message.

CHILD FIND ONTARIO

Mr. Dave Levac: Today marks two very special milestones for Child Find Ontario. May is the 25th anniversary for Child Find Ontario and also the 18th annual Green Ribbon of Hope Campaign.

Ms. Sue Snider, the deputy mayor of Mulmar, vice-president of Child Find Ontario and first vice-president of Child Find Canada, joins me today in the east gallery in asking members of this House to assist Child Find in bringing messages of hope to families in our community.

The concept of the Green Ribbon of Hope was developed by students of Holy Cross Secondary School in St. Catharines, home of the honourable Minister of

Transportation, Jim Bradley, as a result of the abduction and subsequent murder of a 15-year-old child, Kristen French, on April 16, 1992.

The green ribbon is a symbol of recognition for the many children who go missing every year. The colour green embodies the sign of hope for those children who have gone missing.

Last year, the RCMP National Missing Children Services reported that over 21,000 children went missing in Ontario alone.

With recent events in Woodstock, the education and prevention programs that Child Find Ontario provides are vital in helping families cope with the many obstacles that were not an issue 25 years ago. As the advent of new technology emerges, cyberbullying and online predators are presenting an even greater threat to our youth.

I regret to inform this House that teenage runaways still remain on the rise.

In honour of all searching parents, I ask that we take the leadership role in promoting the safe return of all missing children. I've provided each member with a green ribbon, and I ask us to remember National Missing Children's Day on this 25th of May.

TOURISM

Mr. Norm Miller: I rise today to comment on a recent tourism proposal. The scheme comes out of Mr. Sorbara's report, *Discovering Ontario*. The province intends to create 11 regional destination marketing and management organizations, or DMMOs. The McGuinty government plans to allocate \$40 million each year for the DMMOs and to increase taxes on accommodations by 3% to pay for it.

If this proposal is actually going to work, if this new tax and the spending that goes along with it is going to attract more visitors to Ontario, it needs to be properly executed. So far, the government has it wrong.

Michael Lawley, executive director of Muskoka Tourism, points out: "From our point of view that is just not going to work. The connection is not really relevant in our particular situation." That's because the ministry proposes to lump Muskoka in with the York-Simcoe and Grey-Bruce regions.

Muskoka has been in the tourism industry since the 1860s. The region boasts water-based features, cottage and outdoor experiences, arts and culture, heritage and the rugged granite shorelines of the Precambrian Shield. There is already a strong Parry Sound-Muskoka brand based on similar tourism features. It would make much more sense to create a DMMO that puts Parry Sound, Muskoka and Algonquin Park together.

The tourism ministry's suggestion begs the questions: What is this government thinking? Has anyone from the ministry actually gone out on the ground to look at the implications of their proposal? What is the possible rationale for lumping Muskoka with York region and the city of Vaughan?

HEALTH CARE

Mrs. Laura Albanese: Effective and timely health care is a primary concern for all Ontarians, including my constituents of York South–Weston. I am pleased to rise today to speak about our government's latest initiative in the ongoing commitment to strengthening our health care system and improving access to care.

The proposed legislative changes will enhance patient safety and improve access to care by building on existing, highly successful team environments. The increased collaboration between professionals such as nurses, pharmacists, physiotherapists, dietitians, midwives and medical radiation technologists will ensure that all Ontarians receive a high level of care.

The ability of nurses to order X-rays, dietitians to prick skin to check a patient's blood readings, and pharmacists to extend or adapt prescriptions means not only that these professionals will more fully utilize their skills, but doctors will be able to spend more time with each patient. This will be widely welcomed by the residents of York South–Weston, who support better access to health care and having more choices in who provides it.

This is a positive step in improving access to care. Our government must remain dedicated to ensuring that our health care system is the best it can be.

JOHN SCHOONDERBEEK

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm pleased to rise today to pay tribute to a constituent, John Schoonderbeek. John is among just nine individuals from across Canada who were recognized for a 2008 Clean World Award from Pitch-In Canada. This award is signed by Governor General Michaëlle Jean, who is the patron for Pitch-In Canada.

On Sunday, May 24, I was privileged to attend the presentation of this national honour at Brookside Cottage Bed and Breakfast, near Tyrone, Ontario, in my riding. Brookside Cottage is the home of John's sister, Corinne van de Grootevheen. Corinne, who is a nature lover and artisan herself, was also the initiator of this award for her brother, John.

For this special celebration, John was joined by his wife, Sharon, and daughters Lisa and Jill, amongst many other family members and members of the community at large.

For John Schoonderbeek, stewardship for his environment is an everyday priority. For the past 10 years, he has walked over seven kilometres each day, picking up garbage on the roadside and in ditches and woods around his community in Hampton and Mitchell's Corners.

John is a daily inspiration to young and old in his community. Congratulations to John Schoonderbeek for leading by example in our environment.

BREAST CANCER

Mr. Bill Mauro: In 1999, a volunteer committee of nine ladies organized a bachelor auction to raise funds to

help fight breast cancer in northwestern Ontario. Over the past 11 years, volunteer committees continued the work of these nine women, and the Bachelors for Hope Charity Auction became the premiere ladies'-night-out event in Thunder Bay. The auction supports the Northern Cancer Fund of the Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Foundation.

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It is because of the dedication, commitment and devotion of all the volunteer committee members, past and present, that the total amount raised by the auction reached \$63,000 this year and over \$500,000 since its inception.

This year's committee includes Keely Hartviksen, Deb Emery, Autumn Lindsay, Janice Harasyn, Becky Keighley, Heather Vita, Jessica Bryck, Michael Pedri, Bridgette Parker and Athena Kreiner, as well as dance coordinators Fay Steadwell and Lindsay Fron.

That first committee in 1999 included Sandy Neilly, Pamela Henderson, Kathy Ball, Kathy Mastrangelo, Mary Wrigley, Lori Lee, Jackie Collier, Shirley MacDonell and Vicky Bowen.

This year's auction featured 10 bachelors, a great deal of support from the business community and many male volunteers who acted as ushers. I was honoured to volunteer as well.

In 11 years, this auction has funded and supported initiatives to reduce breast cancer through education and awareness, to increase access to screening, to reduce wait times for care, and to improve breast cancer treatment. Supporters of the Bachelors for Hope Charity Auction truly make a difference.

LABOUR MOBILITY

Ms. Sophia Aggelonitis: Ontarians continue to hear about the economic downturn on the radio, on television and in the newspapers.

On this side of the House, we have taken many steps to strengthen our economy by removing barriers to labour mobility.

Ontario's workers are among the most productive in the country.

The proposed legislative changes would support full labour mobility, allowing more professional workers from across Canada to work in Ontario. They would also allow businesses to draw from a larger talent pool, making them more competitive and better positioning them to weather the economic turmoil.

This legislation builds on our support for the inter-provincial standards red seal program for skilled trades. Our support for this program ensures that it remains the Canadian standard of excellence for training and certification in the skilled trades.

We know that in order for Ontario to compete in the 21st century, we must all be at our best. Breaking down barriers to labour mobility ensures that Ontario remains an attractive place to do business.

WORKPLACE FATALITIES

M^{me} France Gélinas: Last Thursday night in Sudbury, I had the opportunity to attend a very important meeting held by a group of concerned citizens who are asking the government for a workplace fatalities family bill of rights. The bill of rights would provide family members of victims of workplace fatalities and serious injuries access to information. Their asks are simple. They want the right to designate a representative to act on their behalf;

the right to be notified of meetings and hearings, and the opportunity to participate;

the right to recommend individuals to be interviewed, and access to the transcripts and written reports;

the right to be kept informed; and

the right to have access to the documents gathered and produced during the accident investigation.

They also told me that to give them access to information, we don't even need to change the laws; we just need modifications to the regulation.

They have started a postcard writing campaign to have access to information, the same information that is available to the other parties.

Minister Fonseca and Minister Bartolucci, it is within your power to make those regulatory changes and give those families access to information. How much more time, effort and energy do you want the good people of Sudbury to spend before you do the right thing and make those regulatory changes?

FOOD AND BEVERAGE PROCESSING INDUSTRY

Mr. Jim Brownell: It is my pleasure to offer a very warm welcome today to representatives of the Alliance of Ontario Food Processors in the gallery. The alliance represents the interests of Ontario's food and beverage processing industry—manufacturers of products we enjoy every day.

The food and beverage processing industry is a major contributor to jobs and the economy of Ontario. In total, the industry generates \$33 billion in shipments annually, directly employs over 110,000 people, and is the major customer of Ontario's farmers, transforming over 70% of what is produced at the farm level into safe, quality food for consumers.

This is the first Queen's Park Day being held by the Alliance of Ontario Food Processors, and we certainly welcome them. Representatives of food and beverage manufacturers will be meeting today with MPPs and government officials to talk about some of the major issues affecting the industry in Ontario. They will also be discussing the opportunities the industry can provide to support the government's key priorities of skilled jobs, health, environment and building the economy.

I encourage all of you to attend the alliance's reception today in the legislative dining room from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m. Alliance members have travelled from ridings across the province to let us know that they are important

assets to communities throughout Ontario. This is a great opportunity for you to meet representatives from your area, learn more about this dynamic industry and sample some of the amazing food and beverage products that are made right here in Ontario. Welcome to you.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

ACCESSIBILITY FOR THE DISABLED

ACCESSIBILITÉ POUR LES PERSONNES HANDICAPÉES

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Let me welcome in the House Roxanne Whiting, who is the ASL interpreter. Welcome.

Today marks the beginning of National Access Awareness Week in Canada.

Dans tout le pays, les collectivités célèbrent l'importance de l'accessibilité pour les personnes handicapées. Des obstacles empêchent trop souvent des personnes handicapées de travailler, de suivre des études et d'avoir accès aux services dont elles ont besoin et qu'elles méritent.

Our government has a plan to remove these barriers. In fact, by January 1, 2010, the Ontario public service and all other public sector organizations will be required to follow our first accessibility standard and provide customer service in a way that is accessible to people of all abilities.

Accessible customer service is about learning how to communicate with someone who has a disability. It is about listening to their needs. Most importantly, it is about being willing to help. I encourage everyone to visit accesson.ca to learn how to do just that.

Lorsque les députés de cette Assemblée ont voté à l'unanimité l'adoption de la Loi sur l'accessibilité pour les personnes handicapées de l'Ontario il y a près de quatre ans, nous avons envoyé un message fort à la population de la province. Le moment est venu de s'assurer que l'ensemble de la population dispose de chances égales pour vivre, travailler et étudier en Ontario.

By 2025, our vision is an Ontario where people with disabilities can fully participate in everything our great province has to offer. In the coming year, more accessibility standards will be finalized to help make this vision a reality. What's more, these standards will help businesses attract a new customer base.

Plus tard cette semaine, je me rendrai au Musée royal de l'Ontario, qui a vraiment fait sien l'esprit de notre loi. Les visiteurs handicapés peuvent visiter facilement le musée et ses expositions. C'est un excellent exemple des progrès exceptionnels qui sont accomplis dans toute la province.

I encourage all members to take some time this week to think about one thing we can all do to break down barriers for people with disabilities. It can be as easy as asking how you can help.

Cette semaine, et pendant toute l'année, donnons vie au concept d'accessibilité.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Responses?

Ms. Sylvia Jones: As the Progressive Conservative critic for community and social services, I'm pleased to be able to recognize this week as National Access Awareness Week. Each year, National Access Awareness Week encourages Canadians to think about and find ways to break down the barriers faced by individuals with disabilities. The barrier can be a building or space design that limits mobility, communication that limits understanding of information or a lack of technology that prevents information access, potential limiting policies and practices and attitudes that foster discrimination.

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Access means more than just removing barriers. It means changes in attitudes and support that allow all people with visible or invisible disabilities to be part of community life. People with learning, developmental and psychiatric disabilities or other invisible impairments should not be forgotten when we strive for equal access.

National Access Awareness Week promotes access for all people with disabilities, including people with mobility, sensory, non-visible and intellectual disabilities. It is very important that we raise awareness for accessibility standards not only during this week of recognition but every day.

While I am an advocate for increasing accessibility, Ontarians need to know that their government will be there to support them. With the Accessibility for Ontarians Act, the intent is for Ontarians to manoeuvre easily at home, work and public places. However, as you can imagine, the cost to implementing such a bill is enormous.

In February, I addressed the Minister of Finance in my capacity not only as Progressive Conservative critic for community and social services but also as the member for Dufferin-Caledon. This letter to Minister Duncan, written three months ago, has gone unanswered. I will use this opportunity to refresh the minister's memory of my letter and the importance of increasing accessibility standards within our communities.

Over the past number of months, I've heard from many municipal representatives and non-profit housing providers that the costs associated with implementing the proposed standards under the act are prohibitive. Municipalities share the goal of breaking down barriers for Ontarians with disabilities; however, they are concerned about how they will be able to make the retrofits or buy the specialized equipment as outlined in the proposed standards.

A KPMG costing study undertaken by the Accessibility Directorate of Ontario estimated that the information and communications standards as drafted would cost small municipalities an increase of 1% to 3% of their operating budget. Based on the same KPMG report, the Ontario Non-Profit Housing Association estimates the annual cost for their members will be between \$10 million and \$60 million per year.

Given these costs, the Association of Municipalities of Ontario is recommending that the Liberal government do further costing analysis that is reflective of the size and capacity of organizations to comply with the requirements of the proposed standards. In addition to this recommendation, I suggested that accessibility retrofits be included in the eligibility criteria that are developed for the infrastructure funding allocations in the provincial budget. This is a very important issue to municipalities, and the minister has not yet answered these concerns.

I fully support the intent to break down the barriers for Ontarians with disabilities but I also support action. Words do not mean anything unless they have action attached to them.

Although there will be many benefits, the cost of this act will be staggering. There will need to be new infrastructure, training, human resources and technology to encompass the scope of this legislation, most of which the municipalities quite simply cannot afford on their own. They need help and they need support.

These costs cannot simply be downloaded to our municipalities. We all want increased accessibility standards. I hope that this week of recognition will be a reminder to the McGuinty government to practise what they preach by not just speaking about accessibility standards but actually making Ontario a leader in accessibility for the disabled. Thank you.

M^{me} France Gélinas: The concept of National Access Awareness Week was originally developed by Rick Hansen after his Man in Motion world tour. I actually remember when Rick Hansen was in Sudbury; I attended his speech at the Sudbury arena, and let me tell you, there was not a dry eye in the entire arena. His idea was to bring together, in a spirit of partnership, voluntary organizations of persons with disabilities, business, labour and government to effect meaningful changes in the daily lives of people with disabilities.

The objective of this week is, first, to assess the accessibility of services and facilities, to set measurable goals, to make practical improvements and celebrate achievement. National Access Awareness Week is intended to raise public awareness of the barriers, to encourage communities to assess the level of accessibility in their jurisdiction and to plan for the removal of those barriers. Today is a time to look forward and ask, what can be done to ensure the full integration and dignity of persons with disabilities in Ontario?

Access, of course, means more than just removing barriers; it means changing attitudes and improving all kinds of supports to allow people with visible or invisible disabilities to be part of community life. Some 120,000 Ontarians live with developmental disabilities, and many of them also have physical disabilities. Many of these men and women benefit greatly from government-funded support programs, but many of them with disabilities continue to face barriers to employment, housing, income—to services in general.

Too many individuals with disabilities and their families are without the support that they need. According to the Provincial Network on Developmental Ser-

vices, over 13,000 people with a developmental disability are awaiting residential services, day support or other supports and services, and many families can wait up to five years or more for those services.

The government recently passed the Services for Persons with Developmental Disabilities Act, but it isn't clear if the act will help with accessibility, fairness and quality of service. It may create a system that is more flexible, but flexibility does not mean fairness, accessibility and quality of care for all Ontarians.

There is a need for a long-term funding framework to ensure that all Ontarians with developmental disabilities have continued access to the support and services they need. They presently tag this at \$325 million more a year.

There needs to be improvement to the wages and working conditions for all workers in the developmental services sector so that we can recruit and retain qualified people to offer the best quality of care.

There is also a need to improve income support for people with disabilities. A single person on the Ontario disability support program receives just over \$1,000 a month. That's about \$12,000 a year. With this, they must cover all expenses, starting with shelter, food, clothing and transportation. Current ODSP rates fall way below the poverty line, which for a single person living in an urban area is set at \$19,000. For people who become disabled and have to rely on ODSP, it is a sentence to a life in poverty—not exactly what I want this province to be known for.

Barriers to employment are also a problem, as this government continues to claw back employment earnings from people receiving ODSP. It is often so difficult for those people to get employment, and when they finally do get paid employment, their wages get clawed back by the government. What kind of support is that? It is utterly wrong to punish people with disabilities who finally succeed in finding employment.

This government has an aging-at-home strategy, but why limit it to seniors? People with disabilities also want to age at home, and would benefit from some of the initiatives that are being put forward.

Finally, Ontario March of Dimes indicates the need to expand the home and vehicle modification program to meet the rising demand. About one third of people applying to this program need modifications to their homes and vehicles in order to leave hospitals or chronic care facilities, but they are not able to access those programs.

Building an inclusive society that ensures dignity for all Ontarians should be a priority for all of us, not just this week but throughout the year.

PETITIONS

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm pleased to present a huge amount of petitions here today. These are from the hos-

pital in my riding, where there was outrage in the community. I'm just going to read a few of these thousands of petitions. They read as follows:

"Whereas the municipality of Clarington passed resolution C-049-09 in support of Lakeridge Health Bowmanville; and

"Whereas area doctors, hospital staff and citizens have raised concerns that Bowmanville's hospital could turn into little more than a site to stabilize and transfer patients for treatment outside the municipality; and

"Whereas Clarington is a growing community of over 80,000; and

"Whereas we support the continuation of the Lakeridge Bowmanville site through access to on-site services, including emergency room, internal medicine and general surgery;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, request that the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and the McGuinty government take the necessary actions to fund our hospitals equally and fairly. And furthermore, we request that the clinical services plan of the Central East LHIN address the need for the Bowmanville hospital to continue to offer a complete range of services appropriate for the growing community of Clarington."

I'm pleased to sign and support this on behalf of the thousands of constituents who want to be treated fairly.

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HEALTH CARE

M^{me} France Gélinas: "Whereas on October 22, 2008, the Ontario government announced that because of an unexpected deficit it was deferring indefinitely its plan to hire 9,000 full-time nurses and also deferring the establishment of 50 family health teams that offer medical care in a single location;

"Whereas Ontario hospitals are already closing beds and reducing health care because of underfunding and shortage of nurses;

"Whereas this deferral will result in longer wait times by Ontario citizens requiring medical care; and

"Whereas billions of dollars are found by provincial and federal governments to bail out banks and corporations;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, respectfully petition the Ontario Legislature as follows:

"That the government of Ontario proceed without delay to implement its original plan to hire 9,000 full-time nurses and establish 50 family medical teams."

I fully support this petition and will affix my name to it and send it to the table with page Ajoy.

AIR QUALITY

Mr. Charles Sousa: I have a petition that reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ministry of the Environment ... conducted 22 months of ambient air monitoring and

determined that the Clarkson, Mississauga, airshed study area was taxed for respirable particulate matter...; and....

"Whereas the study found that emissions of acrolein and acrylonitrile exceeded provincial limits; and....

"Whereas the MOE stated that it would focus on achieving reductions of the target pollutants from the 57 identified emitters that currently operate in the area; and

"Whereas the Ontario Power Authority is accepting proposals from companies for the operation of a gas-fired power plant in the Clarkson airshed study area that would see a new, very significant source of additional pollution into an airshed already determined as stressed by the MOE;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That no contract be awarded by the Ontario Power Authority for the operation of any gas-fired power plant that would impact the Clarkson airshed study area."

I affix my signature and provide it to Joseph.

TAXATION

Ms. Sylvia Jones: My petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas residents" of Ontario "do not want a provincial harmonized sales tax ... that will raise the cost of goods and services they use every day; and

"Whereas the 13% blended sales tax will cause everyone to pay more for gasoline for their cars, heat, telephone, cable and Internet services for their homes, and will be applied to house sales over \$400,000; and

"Whereas the 13% blended sales tax will cause everyone to pay more for meals under \$4, haircuts, funeral services, gym memberships, newspapers, and lawyer and accountant fees; and

"Whereas the" 13% "blended sales tax grab will affect everyone in the province: seniors, students, families and low-income Ontarians;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the McGuinty Liberal government not increase taxes for Ontario consumers."

I support this petition and am pleased to affix my name to it.

CEMETERIES

Mr. Jim Brownell: I have a number of petitions here that read as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontario's cemeteries are an important part of our cultural heritage, and Ontario's inactive cemeteries are constantly at risk of closure and removal; and

"Ontario's cemeteries are an irreplaceable part of the province's cultural heritage;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"The government must pass Bill 149, the Inactive Cemeteries Protection Act, 2009, to prohibit the re-

location of inactive cemeteries in the province of Ontario."

As I agree with this petition, I shall sign it and send it to the Clerk's table.

TAXATION

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas Ontario is in recession; and

"Whereas Ontario has lost 300,000 manufacturing jobs under Dalton McGuinty's watch; and

"Whereas the McGuinty Liberals promised not to raise taxes; and

"Whereas the McGuinty Liberals did not campaign on harmonizing the PST and GST; and

"Whereas the McGuinty government's plan to harmonize the PST and the GST will result in Ontario taxpayers paying 8% more for a multitude of products and services including gasoline, home heating fuel, Internet services, haircuts, gym memberships, legal services, construction and renovations, car repairs, plumbing and electrical services, landscaping services, leisure activities, hotel rooms, veterinary services for the family pet, and even funeral services; and

"Whereas Ontario taxpayers cannot afford this tax grab;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the government of Ontario abandon the harmonized sales tax plan announced in the 2009 budget; and

"That the government of Ontario abide by the Taxpayer Protection Act and consult with the taxpayers and voters through a referendum or by campaigning on a platform of raising taxes before introducing any tax increase."

I have signed that as I am in agreement.

CEMETERIES

Mrs. Carol Mitchell: "Whereas Ontario's cemeteries are an important part of our cultural heritage, and Ontario's inactive cemeteries are constantly at risk of closure and removal; and

"Ontario's cemeteries are an irreplaceable part of the province's cultural heritage;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"The government must pass Bill 149, the Inactive Cemeteries Protection Act, 2009, to prohibit the relocation of inactive cemeteries in the province of Ontario."

This is from the West Lincoln Historical Society, and I affix my signature to this petition.

TAXATION

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: This is on behalf of the residents of Nepean-Carleton and, I'm sure, of the entire province of Ontario.

The residents “do not want a provincial harmonized sales tax (HST) that will raise the cost of goods and services they use every day; and

“Whereas the 13% blended sales tax will cause everyone to pay more for gasoline for their cars, heat, telephone, cable and Internet services for their homes, and will be applied to house sales over \$400,000; and

“Whereas the 13% blended sales tax will cause everyone to pay more for meals under \$4, haircuts, funeral services, gym memberships, newspapers, and lawyer and accountant fees; and

“Whereas the blended sales tax grab will affect everyone in the province: seniors, students, families and low-income Ontarians;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That the McGuinty Liberal government not increase taxes for Ontario consumers.”

I affix my signature and fully support this petition.

PROFESSIONAL HOCKEY FRANCHISE

Mr. Mike Colle: I have a petition for the Make It Seven people across Ontario.

“Support the move of the Phoenix Coyotes to southern Ontario.

“Whereas Jim Balsillie of Research in Motion has put in an offer to purchase the Phoenix Coyotes and move them to ... southern Ontario; and

“Whereas there are a number of outstanding communities” like Hamilton that would be a great home for the Coyotes;

“Whereas” another “NHL franchise in southern Ontario would” mean jobs and over half a billion dollars in GDP growth, in expansion and construction “television and media revenues and team merchandising; and

“Whereas the hockey fans in southern Ontario are known to be the most loyal” in Canada; and

“Whereas the existing NHL owners should recognize the incredible contribution made by the citizens of southern Ontario to the success of the NHL...;

“We, the undersigned, call upon the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to ... support bringing the Phoenix Coyotes franchise into a southern Ontario community, and call upon the NHL board of governors not to block the shifting of the franchise to a host community in southern Ontario.”

I support the Make It Seven petition, and I affix my name to it.

MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT

Mr. John O'Toole: Mr. Speaker, with your indulgence, I'll read a petition as follows:

“Whereas the current state of Vaughan's elected body and senior staff's inability to perform their respective duties and their continuance to mismanage the financial affairs and business of the municipality is detrimental to the municipality, and we the people and taxpayers of the

city of Vaughan have lost confidence in this council and their ability to perform the functions of office in good faith, accountably and in a transparent manner; and

“Whereas the city of Vaughan elected body and senior staff have broken the public trust and confidence through their inaction on known serious misuses of taxpayer funds, and even after acknowledgement of the misuses have failed to take action to recover the funds or cease the misuses;

“Whereas the financial audits for the 2006 municipal elections requested by the taxpayers of Vaughan conducted by Ken Froese of LECG identified nearly 200 Municipal Elections Act contraventions for three of the elected members.

“The audits identified contraventions of all three members, resulting in two of the members facing potential removal from office due to overspending.

“Additional election contraventions include over-contributions of funds, unreported expenses and improper use of elections funds which were used to pay for home repairs, clothes, car repairs and office equipment. The mayor and her spouse have been charged under the Election Act;

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“Whereas the audit conducted by Ernst and Young revealed that nearly \$14,000 in taxpayer money was used by the CEO of the city, and authorized by the city manager without any itemized receipts or reasonable justification of the use of public funds. Further investigation has identified thousands more of taxpayer money being used to reimburse Vaughan council and senior staff without itemized receipts and business reasons for the expenditures;

“Whereas Vaughan council in January 2008 was made aware by Ernst and Young of approximately \$13,000 in public funds paid to and authorized by a spouse of a city employee working for an elected official and in breach of proper policy, including exceeding a \$3,000 limit. No action has been taken to recover the money;

“Whereas a local and regional councillor gave a \$30,000 contract to an immediate family with no competitive bids. There are no policies governing elected officials that allow families, relatives and friends from benefiting financially;

“Whereas Vaughan council continues to mismanage taxpayer funds, where millions of dollars have been used to pay legal fees for lawsuits among members of the council themselves, and including a SLAPP suit launched against two of its residents;

“Whereas the residents of Vaughn were denied access to publicly available information and therefore forced to obtain documents revealing the misuse of public funds through freedom-of-information legislation and the information and privacy commission;

“Whereas section 9 of the Municipal Affairs Act gives responsibility of enforcement to the minister, who has the power to appoint an auditor or monitor and has the power to direct a provincial audit of the financial affairs of the

municipality on a petition in writing signed by not less than 50 ratepayers in a municipality;

"We, the taxpayers and ratepayers of the city of Vaughan, exercise our right and petition the minister to appoint an auditor to complete a forensic municipal audit of the city of Vaughan's financial affairs from 2003 to present and, additionally, should the outcome of the audit return a finding of significant issues, we seek the appointment of a supervisor to administer the affairs of the city of Vaughan in order to restore public confidence.

"Furthermore, we also request that any inappropriate spending of taxpayers' money be reimbursed and the individuals responsible be held accountable."

I'm pleased to report and submit this petition on behalf of the constituents in the riding of Vaughan.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I will remind the member from Durham that petitions do need to be certified by the table in advance to presentation.

CHILD CUSTODY

Mr. Jim Brownell: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"We, the people of Ontario, deserve and have the right to request an amendment to the Children's Law Reform Act to emphasize the importance of children's relationships with their parents and grandparents;

"Whereas subsection 20(2.1) requires parents and others with custody of children to refrain from unreasonably placing obstacles to personal relations between the children and their grandparents; and

"Whereas subsection 24(2) contains a list of matters that a court must consider when determining the best interests of a child. The bill amends that subsection to include a specific reference to the importance of maintaining emotional ties between children and grandparents; and

"Whereas subsection 24(2.1) requires a court that is considering custody of or access to a child to give effect to the principle that a child should have as much contact with each parent and grandparent as is consistent with the best interests of the child; and

"Whereas subsection 24(2.2) requires a court that is considering custody of a child to take into consideration each applicant's willingness to facilitate as much contact between the child and each parent and grandparent as is consistent with the best interests of the child;

"We, the undersigned, hereby petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to amend the Children's Law Reform Act as above to emphasize the importance of children's relationships with their parents and grandparents."

As I agree with this petition, I shall sign it and send it to the Clerk's table.

GREEN POWER GENERATION

Mr. Bill Murdoch: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly:

"Whereas the residents of Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound believe that Bill 150, Green Energy and Green Economy Act, 2009, is a new Liberal tax grab;

"Whereas a London Economics report showed that the increase in hydro bills could be at least \$1,200 per household per year plus 8% for the new HST;

"Whereas the Ministry of Energy and Infrastructure has not stated where or how all these supposed new green jobs are going to be created;

"Whereas no scientific studies have been done to prove or disprove the health effects of living near wind turbines;

"Whereas the Liberals have failed to fully think out Bill 150 and how it will affect municipalities;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Liberal government should delay the implementation of Bill 150 and provide the citizens of Ontario with further research on the above-mentioned concerns."

I've signed this. Thank you.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): That ends the time for petitions. I would remind all members to ensure that their petitions for presentation are certified at the table. I'd also say to members on all sides of the House that if there is some concern over the length of petitions, that is not for me to referee. If this is an issue that you want addressed, I would suggest that you take it up with your respective House leaders, or better yet, send the matter to the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly and let them deal with it so that we have very clear rules and parameters dealing with petitions. I don't feel it is the role of the Speaker to be judging that.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

REGULATED HEALTH PROFESSIONS STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 2009 LOI DE 2009 MODIFIANT DES LOIS EN CE QUI CONCERNE LES PROFESSIONS DE LA SANTÉ RÉGLEMENTÉES

Mr. Balkissoon, on behalf of Mr. Caplan, moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 179, An Act to amend various Acts related to regulated health professions and certain other Acts /
Projet de loi 179, Loi modifiant diverses lois en ce qui concerne les professions de la santé réglementées et d'autres lois.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Debate?

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: I'm pleased to address the House today for second reading of our proposed legislation, which, if passed, would support the government's HealthForceOntario health human resources strategy and improve access to health care in Ontario.

Our government is committed to ensuring that more Ontarians have regular access to quality family health care in their own communities. We are working to ensure that Ontario has the right number and mix of appropriately educated health care practitioners in the right place at the right time with the right skills. That is why we developed Ontario's health human resources strategy. This strategy supports team-based care and interprofessional collaboration.

Evidence shows that the benefits of this kind of approach are undeniable. They include improved patient outcomes, improved access to care, increased caregiver satisfaction and decreased turnover, and are a more effective use of our precious health care resources.

Our proposed legislation would increase access to care for Ontarians. It would allow for more efficient health care services, more providers working together in teams and an enhanced regulatory system that would increase patient safety. This would be accomplished by amending the Regulated Health Professions Act and other acts to enable certain regulated health professions to provide more services; amending the Regulated Health Professions Act and other acts to improve patient safety and strengthen health professionals' regulations; and amending the Drug and Pharmacies Regulation Act to enable remote dispensing of prescription drugs in Ontario. Amendments to the Regulated Health Professions Act would allow providers to perform specific health care actions called controlled acts, or other diagnostic tests.

Here is how the proposed legislation would change certain health professions.

For chiropody and podiatry, the amendments would add to the Chiropody Act the controlled act of administering, by inhalation, a substance designated in the regulations. This would be carried out in accordance with the requirements in regulation.

For dental hygiene, it would add to the Dental Hygiene Act the controlled act of prescribing, dispensing, compounding or selling a drug designated in the regulations. This would be carried out in accordance with requirements in regulation.

For dentistry, it would add the controlled act of compounding drugs and the controlled act of selling drugs, carried out in accordance with the requirements set out in regulations to the Dentistry Act.

It would add to the Dietetics Act the controlled act of taking blood samples by skin pricking for the purpose of monitoring capillary blood readings.

The Health Care Consent Act, 1996, would be amended to allow a dietitian to be an evaluator, determining an individual's capacity for the purpose of admission to a care facility defined under the act.

It would add to the Respiratory Therapy Act—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Durham on a point of order.

Mr. John O'Toole: Mr. Speaker, I would ask if a quorum is present.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Deputy Clerk, is there a quorum present?

The Deputy Clerk (Mr. Todd Decker): A quorum is present, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Please continue.

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Mr. Balkissoon: It would add to the Respiratory Therapy Act the controlled act of administering a substance by inhalation as prescribed in the regulation.

Medical Radiation Technology Act amendments would allow a new scope-of-practice statement. Medical radiation technologists would also be able to administer substances by injection or inhalation. They would also be able to perform suction tracheotomy, administer contrast media, or put an instrument, hand or finger into body openings and perform procedures on tissues below the skin; for example, give a needle.

Midwives have had some current controlled acts revised so that they would be able to better care for their patients. Midwives would also have new controlled acts that they could perform, including telling patients their diagnosis, giving suppository drugs, placing a tube in the nose or mouth of a newborn, and taking blood samples from fathers and donors.

Nurse practitioners have had some of the controlled acts they are currently able to perform revised by removing limitations on them, including communicating a diagnosis, performing a procedure below the skin and putting an instrument, hand or finger in body openings. New controlled acts for nurse practitioners would include dispensing, selling or compounding a drug designated in regulation; setting or casting a fracture of a bone or dislocation of a joint; and applying forms of energy—for example, ultrasound.

Additionally, the Healing Arts Radiation Protection Act would be amended to remove limitations on ordering X-rays.

The Pharmacy Act would be amended to include a new scope of practice statement for pharmacists that would more accurately reflect what they will be able to do. The Pharmacy Act would also be revised to allow pharmacists to prescribe certain drugs to manage patient health and to prick or lance skin and give certain substances through injection and inhalation for patients' demonstration and education.

The Physiotherapy Act would include a new scope of practice statement that would clarify and describe more accurately how they practise and the services they may provide to patients.

Physiotherapists will be authorized new controlled acts, including telling patients the diagnosis, providing wound care during a person's physiotherapy treatment, assessing and rehabilitating pelvic musculature, and ordering certain forms of energy, for example, diagnostic ultrasound.

While we're making important changes to enable practitioners to provide more services, we at the same time ensure that the services would be provided safely.

This legislation would strengthen the system of health professionals regulation in the province, and would assure patients of safe and high-quality services, deliver-

ed by competent and accountable health care practitioners.

Regulatory colleges would have a duty to develop, in collaboration and consultation with other colleges, standards of knowledge, skill and judgment relating to the performance of controlled acts common among health professionals.

Quality assurance programs would be strengthened by adding a mandatory component for continuing education and professional development related to interprofessional collaboration.

A new framework for reviewing the drug authorities of professions would ensure practitioners may access the latest drugs to ensure that patients receive the best possible care. It would also ensure that practitioners administer, prescribe, dispense, compound or sell drugs safely.

Amendments to the Regulated Health Professions Act would ensure that health colleges can also make regulations setting certain requirements regarding these activities for their members to further ensure patient safety.

This legislation, if passed, would allow these regulated health professionals to better utilize their hard-earned skills and training, it would reduce barriers to their practice, and it would help promote a health care system that is more efficient and more easily adaptable to new technologies and rising patient expectations.

In addition, the legislation would amend the Drug and Pharmacies Regulation Act to permit remote dispensing. This means that a pharmacist would be able to dispense drug products to patients without being physically present at the point of dispensing. In many cases, this would be accomplished through the use of innovative technology.

Drug dispensing systems are relatively new innovations within Ontario's drug distribution system. They're the way of the future, and we are convinced that they have great benefits for patients and pharmacists. Introducing the new technology into pharmacy operations may help to enhance patients' access to medications by making medications readily available where they're most often prescribed, provide convenience for remote communities and others, potentially reduce the cost of drug distribution, and free up pharmacists to provide the additional services that the other amendments may provide.

Our government wants to ensure that Ontarians have increased access to essential health care. That's why we're taking these steps to better utilize all of Ontario's health professionals. We're working to optimize the scope of these professionals by removing limitations on what they are currently authorized to do. Standards of practice would be maintained, and patient safety remains prominent.

The proposed legislation would increase collaboration and teamwork among all regulated professions and build on existing, highly successful team environments. Interprofessional care involves partnerships among health care providers focusing on providing care for the whole patient. Interprofessional care improves access to care for

the patient, while at the same time it provides a more satisfying work environment for the provider. On many levels it's an ideal arrangement, ensuring that everyone benefits: patients as well as providers, not to mention the health care system overall. Interdisciplinary care at the patient level promotes mutual respect among team members, it improves communications and information sharing, it places the patient at the centre, it promotes stability for the team, and finally, it ensures responsibility and accountability for results.

Team-based care is transforming the province's health care system. Let me remind the members that interprofessional collaboration is already working in Ontario. For example, in our 150 family health teams, doctors, nurses, nurse practitioners, pharmacists and other health professionals all work together to meet the needs of the whole patient. These teams work so well because patients benefit from the breadth of expertise used in their care, while team members derive greater satisfaction and a better work-life balance. Other examples of collaborative teams are anaesthesia care teams and emergency department outreach teams.

Our government wants to make interprofessional care the provincial standard because it's the right approach in order to enhance care for the patient, boost professional satisfaction for the provider, and improve the efficiency of the health system as a whole.

These proposed amendments are another step along the road we embarked upon in 2003 to improve access to and the quality of the province's health care system, and we've come a long way along that road. The amendments we proposed are part of a strategy to build a health care plan we began to implement more than five years ago. Since our government took office in 2003, we've increased overall health care spending to an unprecedented \$42.6 billion this year, representing a whopping 45% increase. Today, 43 cents of every public dollar we spend in Ontario is on health care. This investment has yielded great results.

There are more front-line medical workers in Ontario than ever before. For instance, since 2004 we've increased the number of first-year medical school spaces by 160, and just last week we announced an expansion of 100 new medical spaces that will mean more doctors for Ontario.

Over the past five years, our government has more than doubled the number of international medical graduate training and assessment positions. Today, more than 5,600 internationally trained doctors are practising in Ontario, providing quality front-line services to the people of this province. The College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario issued nearly 3,500 certificates of registration in 2008, the highest number ever issued in a single year. Our 150 family health teams have provided more primary care and are helping to restore confidence in the system. We've nearly doubled the number of community health centres.

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We are proud of what we've accomplished, but our work continues. To enhance access to family care, we're

spending \$35 million over two years to create 22 more nurse practitioner-led clinics. We'll also create 50 more family health teams to add to the ones already in the system, providing primary care in a collaborative environment in communities across Ontario.

Our population is aging and growing. A large proportion of Ontarians are starting to place ever-increasing pressures on our health care system. Our people expect and deserve no less than a modern, accessible and sustainable health care system.

This new legislation will mean increased access to care for Ontarians. It will allow for more efficient health care services, more providers working together in teams and an enhanced regulatory system that will increase patient care. It will remove barriers that prevent health care professionals from delivering services that they have been trained to provide. This is a positive step, and we plan to review the HPRAC recommendations in the future, to determine how to enhance patient care and allow providers to fully practise their skills.

Our goal is to ensure that Ontario's health regulatory system is responsive to continuing changes to health care delivery and the clinical practice environment. For the greater good of our health care system, we need to make the best possible use of all the members of the health care team, and to modernize our drug distribution systems, to enhance access, convenience and patient satisfaction.

I urge all members of this Legislature to support this legislation.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Questions and comments?

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: In general, I can agree with the thrust of the act. However, I think that as we expand the scope for various health professions to prescribe drugs, we should also put with that, in legislation or by regulation, some checks and balances with regard to doing that.

Recently our public accounts committee, in dealing with medication for seniors in our long-term-care homes, found—in fact, the committee was aghast at the fact that the average long-term-care residence in the province of Ontario is taking 12 prescriptions per patient, as outlined by the Auditor General last year, as well as having five new prescriptions each week. This amounts to a cost of \$340 million for some 75,000 people in our province. As you expand the scope of health professions who can prescribe drugs, then you lay the ground for the possibility of even more drugs being prescribed to people when in fact sometimes their use would be questionable. So there's a cost factor, but more importantly, there's a factor with relation to having people take too many drugs for their illnesses.

I would like to see, with this bill, some checks and balances with regard to those who are prescribing. I would like to see computer records of what each prescriber is doing over a period of time, so that if someone is not using this new-found power with the proper diligence, then that person will be discovered and that practice will be stopped.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Lou Rinaldi): Further questions or comments?

Mr. Paul Miller: There's no question that this bill before us is the result of many hours of hard work and many individuals involved. It is essential that our health care system have the ability to adapt in order to best serve the needs of our population.

There are a lot of things that could have been dealt with in this bill that weren't dealt with. One example would be dispensing fees. Many of my constituents complain that they'll go to a pharmacy and they'll be allotted 30 tablets and charged a dispensing fee, and then they'll have to go back in a month, when they could have been allotted three months' worth or four months' worth. They'll end up paying three or four times for dispensing fees, which can be very costly, and I've had many complaints about that. I don't see anything in there.

Also, the professionals who work in long-term care were left out of this bill. They could have done something more in reference to helping them with costs and mileage and better wages for some of these people who work in elderly homes.

Looking at the bill as a whole, it's a move in the right direction, but there will be other things that my colleague, in her hour speech, will bring up that are of grave concern to the NDP, and of course we feel that these probably would have best served the population by being dealt with a little bit better in future discussions concerning the bill. So we're hoping that they will remain open-minded and optimistic towards input from other sources.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Lou Rinaldi): Further questions or comments?

Mr. Mike Colle: This bill really is about maximizing the potential of our health care professionals. We're blessed in this province with so many talented people who work in our health care system. I know we concentrate a great deal on our doctors, but we have an incredible pool of talent in this province who are more than willing and capable to offer exceptional health care services to Ontarians.

We talk about nurse practitioners who right now cannot cast a fracture; this bill will allow them to do that.

Physiotherapists cannot treat a wound right now; this bill will allow them to do it.

Our very talented midwives, who do incredible work in childbirth, cannot, for instance, give certain drugs. They can't even tell patients their diagnosis. This bill, if passed, will allow them to do that.

Dietitians do incredible work throughout society.

Medical radiation technologists will be able to use suction in a tracheotomy and put an instrument, hand or finger past certain body openings.

Chiropractors and podiatrists will be able to undertake further remedies.

Dental hygienists, who do great work in dental offices, will be able to perform more duties.

There are just so many examples of talented health care professionals who are very important partners in

health care delivery and have not been able to exercise the talents they've been professionally trained to. This is a very strong complementary piece of legislation that will embody new legislative authorities for these health professionals to be full partners in our health care system. It's about time this was done; it's long overdue.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Lou Rinaldi): Further questions and comments? Having heard none, the member from Scarborough–Rouge River has two minutes to respond.

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: I want to thank the member from Carleton–Mississippi Mills, the member from Hamilton and my friend from Eglinton–Lawrence. Bill 179, as it's proposed, would improve access to health care for all Ontarians by allowing our health care providers to maximize their training that they've received to practise in their particular field. Our goal here is to improve the health care system so it is more efficient and adaptable to new and changing technologies that are happening around us on an everyday basis.

Enhancing patient safety, at the same time, is important to us, and I know that the member from Carleton–Mississippi Mills mentioned his concern that he wanted to make sure that that is taken into consideration. I can assure him that that is the duty of our colleges, and they will continue to do the good work they've done over the years and help us to make sure we have the best health care system in Ontario.

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This bill will also help, I would say, to increase team work among all the health care professionals: There would be more collaboration between team members in the future, again to the benefit of the patient and to the benefit of our health care system in the province.

This bill removes many barriers that have existed in the past. They might have been necessary in the past, but in today's changing world in the health care field, our bill is absolutely necessary to bring in modern-day practices. So I would have to say that the government is doing the right thing. We're looking forward to the support of the other two parties and, hopefully, responding in the best way to the needs of the communities that we serve.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Lou Rinaldi): Further debate?

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: I'm very pleased to participate in the debate on behalf of the Progressive Conservative caucus regarding Bill 179, the Regulated Health Professions Statute Law Amendment Act, 2009.

I would begin by saying that this certainly is a step in the right direction. Over the past number of years, HPRAC continues to take a look at the scopes of practice of the different colleges and different professions and has made changes. I think on the whole that the changes that are before us today are worthy of some very serious consideration.

Obviously, there were some colleges and some professions that were disappointed that there wasn't an expansion of their scope of practice, so I look forward to the committee, when we'll have an opportunity to hear

from the people who obviously are very supportive of the bill and others who will express some concern because there hasn't been enough expansion of their scope of practice and others who simply were not taken into consideration.

For us, when we look at this bill, what is uppermost in our minds is the need to protect patient safety. That will be a key consideration as we review the legislation and as we listen to those who make representation, who are going to come before us at a later time.

This is a very large bill; it's going to affect 26 existing acts. So we do need to make sure that we review it and we do the due diligence that is necessary. Some of the changes that are suggested here are going to increase efficiency. Of course, that's good.

So what is the bill going to do if it's passed? Just a few of the highlights:

(1) It's going to allow nurse practitioners, the pharmacists, the physiotherapists, the dietitians, the midwives and the medical radiation technologists to deliver more health services.

(2) It would change the rules for administering, prescribing, dispensing, selling and using drugs in the practices of chiropractors and podiatrists, dental hygienists, dentists, midwives, nurse practitioners, pharmacists, physiotherapists and respiratory therapists.

(3) It would remove restrictions on X-rays that can be ordered by nurse practitioners and enable physiotherapists to order X-rays for specific purposes.

(4) It would require the health colleges to work together to develop common standards of knowledge, skill and judgment in areas where their professions may provide the same or similar services.

(5) It would make team-based care a key component of health college quality assurance programs which ensure the ongoing competence of registered health professionals.

(6) It would require all regulated health professionals to have professional liability insurance.

Finally, it would create a process to ensure new drug prescribing powers are used in a safe manner.

I'd like to now take a look at the different professions that have been impacted and speak briefly about what is going to happen with the expansion of their scope of practice, and also some of the comments that we have heard in that regard.

First of all, let's take a look at the physiotherapists. Bill 179 would enable physiotherapists to order tests such as X-rays, and it would permit them to diagnose patient conditions that are within the scope of practice of the profession of physiotherapy. If passed, this legislation will expand the scope of practice of physiotherapists to conform more closely with their current competencies. Specifically, the changes would enable physiotherapists who have demonstrated the required education and competence—and that is key—to provide additional health care services such as ordering X-rays, to diagnose conditions that may be identified use a physiotherapy assessment, and to treat wounds and conditions, including urinary incontinence or pelvic pain.

Ontario's physiotherapists are pleased with this proposal. Jan Robinson, the registrar and CEO of the college, has commented that "the college shares the government's commitment to improve the ability of Ontarians to obtain the safe and effective health care they need and to also improve the efficiency of the health care system by allowing physiotherapists and other regulated health care professionals to practise to the full extent of their education and competence."

Let's take a look next at pharmacists, who also benefit in Bill 179, because there certainly is an impact here to their scope of practice. HPRAC's review of the scope of practice of pharmacy in Ontario concluded "that pharmacists can offer increased, safe and effective patient care to Ontarians and can contribute more to the management of chronic diseases and interprofessional care" than they do today.

If passed, this bill would allow the pharmacist to administer drugs by injection or inhalation for patient education and demonstration; prescribe drugs for smoking cessation; extend, adapt or adjust prescriptions; pierce or lance the skin for patient education and demonstration; and order lab tests for the purpose of medication monitoring and management.

Pharmacists would be included among all other regulated health professions in the definition of "health practitioner." They would also have a new scope-of-practice statement that includes the "promotion of health," which is definitely a good thing, because our focus should be on doing everything we possibly can to promote good health and prevent disease. And that will not only enhance the quality of life of individuals in this province, but hopefully it would also curb some of the expenses that we're seeing in our health budget.

Pharmacists would also have in their statement the "prevention and treatment of disease, disorders and dysfunctions through monitoring and management of medication therapy."

According to the Ontario Pharmacists' Association, "Enabling pharmacists to practise in an enhanced, collaborative role would improve patient care, reduce wait times, and increase the efficiency of Ontario's health care system." Specifically, the OPA suggests, "An expanded scope of practice would make it much easier for" pharmacists "to help monitor and manage chronic diseases such as diabetes and asthma"—both of which, of course, are on the increase, particularly diabetes—"and provide patients with the care they need, when they need it. And "it will help improve ... the burden on emergency departments," according to the OPA.

Let's take a look at nurse practitioners. Although nurse practitioners and the Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario are pleased to see the expansion of the scope of practice—and I would agree that the scope-of-practice expansion is in the public interest—there is certainly some concern that what we see here is not enough, according to the nurse practitioners, to increase timely access to health services, if there had been greater changes made.

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This legislation, if passed, would allow the NPs to carry out a variety of acts and treatment procedures previously not authorized to them, such that they could, in the future, set bone fractures. They could dispense certain drugs. They could order bone density tests, as well as MRIs.

But, as I said, the RNAO and the Nurse Practitioners' Association of Ontario say:

"... the government will fail the public if they refuse to act in two key areas: broader prescribing authority to enable timely access to pharmaceutical treatment and authority to admit and discharge patients in hospitals.

"RNAO and NPAO argue the province also failed to recognize that NPs represent a critical resource when it comes to reducing wait times by improving access to enter and exit the hospital system."

Now, the government had been asked by these organizations to remove the legislative barriers, and they had asked that their scope of practice be expanded to allow the nurse practitioners to admit and discharge patients in hospitals, which the government refused to do.

Now, if you take a look at nurse practitioners, Ontario was the very first jurisdiction in Canada to regulate the role of the nurse practitioner, 11 years ago. I'm very proud and pleased to say that it was under the Progressive Conservative government that the regulation of nurse practitioners occurred. As I just said, we were the first jurisdiction. However, since that time, we have, and I quote the RNAO, "fallen significantly behind the rest of the country"—in other words, the other provinces—"in fully engaging the role to improve access to timely, safe and effective care." They go on to say, "If the Premier is serious about improving access to patient care and reducing wait times, then he must make all necessary amendments to the legislation."

So they have put out a press release, which I have here, and certainly there is a lot of disappointment. For example, the new changes that allow for open prescribing for nurse practitioners actually already exist in most jurisdictions in Canada and the United States. Unfortunately, we are still behind and the government, according to RNAO and NPAO, really has not recognized that NPs are a very critical resource and that an expanded scope of practice could help reduce wait times by improving access to enter and exit the hospital system. Despite the fact that they have existed here and been regulated for 11 years, we have fallen behind.

I look forward to the presentation that's going to be made by RNAO and the nurse practitioners, because I believe that the talents, the skills and the education of nurse practitioners can be better utilized, as they are in other parts of Canada and, of course, in the United States.

Now, let's turn to dental hygienists. This bill proposes amendments to the Dental Hygiene Act to authorize hygienists to perform the controlled act of prescribing, dispensing, compounding or selling a drug. But it's important to remember that only those drugs that are designated in regulations developed by the College of

Dental Hygienists of Ontario and approved by the Lieutenant Governor in Council are the ones that they can prescribe, dispense, compound or sell.

So these changes are as a result of the college's submission to HPRAC asking for an expansion of their scope of practice in order to allow designated hygienists—again, that's a key word, “designated”—to dispense certain self-treatment therapies and to compound and dispense fluoride rinses and gels in concentrations higher than OTC products.

The college also asked for an extension of the dental hygiene scope of practice to allow qualified dental hygienists to administer local anaesthetic by injection or inhalation, in line with current practice in western provinces. However, HPRAC again did not support that college recommendation. We've been told that the college does intend to continue to advocate for the inclusion of the local anaesthetic within a dental hygienist's scope of practice through an amendment during committee proceedings.

Let's turn to midwifery. HPRAC, to its credit, did recognize that there is a growing crisis in this province when it comes to maternity care. They do recognize and see midwives as playing an important role in providing primary maternity care for low-risk women and their newborns.

There are over 130,000 women who give birth every year in Ontario, and this number is going to increase to 157,000 per year by 2024. Regrettably, the number of primary care providers has not kept pace with these increases. What we need to do is embrace midwifery. We need to make midwives a full part of the health system.

They were first made full-time, of course, in 1994. In our government, between 1995 and 2003, progress was made in enabling them to become more and more involved in the delivery of infants for low-risk women. In recent years we've seen the number of graduates increase from 60 to 90, because there is a huge demand.

But there are still barriers, and certainly those barriers need to be addressed. As such, HPRAC also indicated that midwives require the ability to prescribe a number of medications to carry out their primary maternity care role and to enable them to participate fully in inter-professional teams.

I want to address the issue that has arisen as a result of this bill—it doesn't, by the way, touch physicians' scope of practice, but the Ontario Medical Association does have some opinions about the legislation. Dr. Suzanne Strasberg, president of the Ontario Medical Association, indicates that Ontario's doctors will review this legislation because, again, their priority is to ensure that patient safety is protected and that patients are receiving the best care from the most appropriate health care professionals.

Dr. Strasberg also says, “The level of care that a doctor can provide should not be substituted for expediency. According to a report released by the Institute for Clinical Evaluative Sciences, not having a family doctor leads to more emergency room visits and hospital ad-

missions for those who have chronic diseases in Ontario. That's why Ontario's doctors firmly believe that it should continue to be the goal of the government to help every Ontarian that does not have a family physician [to] find one.”

Now, I would support the opinion that has been put forward by the Ontario Medical Association. We still have close to a million people who do not have a family doctor. Despite the noises made by the government, and their attempt to downplay, we still have a critical shortage of doctors in the province. We're short about 2,000 doctors; we have about 2,600 who are going to be retiring in future years. We do need to make sure that people have access to the family doctor—just to keep that in mind.

The OMA goes on to say that the government has publicly expressed a desire to “support the public delivery of health care ... by better utilizing health professionals, reducing barriers” and facilitating inter-professional collaboration. I think that is a good thing. We need to better utilize health professionals. This legislation allows us to do so. It does allow for some reduction of barriers.

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Of course, we have been advocating for inter-professional collaboration ever since we set up the family health teams, beginning back in 1997-98. Despite the fact that the government tries to take credit for the family health teams, it was our government that first established those. I can remember the first pilot projects that we set up—five to seven—around the province of Ontario, where we encouraged the doctors to start to work in collaboration with other professionals. We're pleased to see that this government did move forward with that approach. I think at the end of the day it helps to provide better access to care in the province of Ontario.

So we need to move forward, we need to maximize the scope of practice of various providers, and we need to ensure that there continues to be collaboration and efficiency within the system.

However, in giving some of the new powers to some of the professionals, we need to make sure that we're not duplicating efforts.

Unfortunately, this government has lagged terribly when it comes to the establishment of a province-wide electronic health record system. A 2008 report published by the Ontario Hospital Association indicates that Ontario needs an eHealth system. The report states, “Improved availability, integration and communication of health care information will result in improved care for those with chronic diseases, greater efficiency in interactions with patients, improved patient safety, improved patient participation in their own health care, and many other positive outcomes.”

During the campaign of 2007, Premier McGuinty indicated that there was going to be an electronic health record for every Ontarian, but not until 2015. So this province lags behind, despite the fact that they've spent millions of dollars and despite the fact that a lot of money

has gone to supporting consultants. We haven't seen a lot of progress since 2003-04. At the same time, other jurisdictions such as Alberta are leading the way in successfully implementing a province-wide EHR system. In Alberta, there are more than 24,000 physicians, pharmacists and other health care providers who are registered. I'm pleased to say that according to Canada Health Infoway, by 2010 PEI, Quebec, Alberta, BC and the Northwest Territories will have an eHealth system. However, here the McGuinty government says that despite the fact they're going to spend \$2 billion more in the next three years, we're not going to have an eHealth system. That just brings us to 2012, and they're saying we won't have it until 2015. I think we can all see that a lot of money is being spent without a lot in the way of results.

If we're going to have effective collaborative care, we need to ensure that we have an electronic health record. Otherwise, all these people who now have these new powers to prescribe drugs—we're not going to know whether somebody else has already prescribed a drug. With the duplication now of the number of people who are going to be able to order an X-ray, we won't know whether or not the patient has received more than one. Without the supportive structure of an electronic health record system, there is a little bit of concern that some of this expanded scope of practice could result in duplication. Of course, duplication is costly for the health system, and certainly it's not a good thing for the patient either.

So they can talk about this bill and doing lots of good things, which it does, but this government needs to make a greater effort to speed up the introduction of an effective electronic health record.

I want to go back again to collaborative care. I think this bill is good because it does enhance access to services for Ontarians. I just want to remind the government, because I saw a few people on the other side make a few comments, that it was our government, the Progressive Conservative government, that established multidisciplinary family health networks in collaboration with the Ontario Medical Association in 1998. These teams were part of our overall plan to improve access to care and to provide a continuum of care that began with health promotion and disease prevention. In fact, we established one of the largest heart health programs in the province of Ontario. We also, by 2001, had established 12 family health networks in Ontario. They were rebranded "family health teams" by this government in 2003.

I think it's important to note that despite the fact that this government has promised to establish 150 family health teams across Ontario, they sometimes take actions, without any warning, which indicate that they don't have a vision or a plan for the future. On April 17, without any warning whatsoever, the McGuinty government imposed what was considered by people throughout the province of Ontario, including people at the medical schools, an ill-timed hiring freeze that prevented doctors from

joining family health teams. This ban was of great concern to doctors, physician recruiters and medical school staff because the ban, so unexpectedly introduced on April 17, without any warning, occurred at a time when hundreds of medical graduates were trying to make a decision as to where they were going to practise. So on May 11, I urged the Minister of Health to lift the freeze in order to enable the almost one million Ontarians without a doctor to at least have some access to the primary health care providers. As a result, later that week the minister did lift the freeze.

My request now to the minister and the McGuinty government is—I'm glad the freeze has been lifted, I'm glad that people in the province are going to have access to these family doctors who are graduating and want to join the family health teams, but you also now have to fully staff these family health teams. It's great to have made a promise to establish 150 family health teams. It's great to talk about collaboration. However, according to your own statistics, as of December 31, 2008, only 32 of the 150 family health teams had hired their full complement of staff, such as nurses, nurse practitioners, doctors and dietitians.

I think a lot of people will find this quite shocking, considering that the McGuinty government has now had six years to get these teams fully staffed. I urge the government to develop a timeline to finally develop a plan in order that you can fully staff these 150 family health teams that you talk about as quickly as possible.

I want to talk about two other components to this bill. I've just reviewed a few of the 10 health professions which will have their scope of practice expanded as a result of this bill, but I also now want to speak very briefly about how this bill will change the dispensing of drugs in Ontario.

The ministry is proposing legislative policy changes that would support different models of drug dispensing which would include, first, telepharmacy, mail-order pharmacy that would enable citizens to get their prescriptions delivered when and how they want them; secondly, they are suggesting remote dispensing machine development by an Ontario-based company. I understand that several Ontario hospitals are investigating the use of these drug dispensing systems and that Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre has two machines in use for out-patients and one for in-patients. As well, dispensing machines are in operation in physicians' offices, clinics, emergency rooms and other health facilities in the United States.

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Additionally, through this bill the ministry is proposing changes to the current reimbursement structure under the Ontario public drug programs for innovative models of dispensing. On this point, I would say the government has, as often is the case, given very little in the way of information and detail about how it intends to change the reimbursement model. I would urge the ministry to provide further clarification on this issue as quickly as possible.

One other policy change being proposed would be to amend the Regulated Health Professions Act by adding the following, and it relates to what is called a college supervisor. The bill says:

"The Lieutenant Governor in Council may appoint a person as a college supervisor on the recommendation of the minister, where the minister considers it appropriate or necessary to do so....

"The minister shall give a council at least 14 days' notice before recommending to the Lieutenant Governor in Council that a college supervisor be appointed....

"Unless the appointment provides otherwise, a college supervisor has the exclusive right to exercise all the powers of a council and every person employed, retained or appointed for the purposes of the administration of"—blah, biah, blah.

"A college supervisor has the same rights as a council and the registrar in respect of the documents, records and information of the college....

"A college supervisor shall report to the minister as required by the minister....

"The minister may issue one or more directions to a college supervisor regarding any matter within the jurisdiction of the supervisor...."

I will tell you, no one quite knows why this legislative proposal is in here. It has come totally out of the blue. I wonder what type of consultation the Minister of Health had with any of Ontario's regulatory colleges. It certainly was not mentioned during the briefing that the ministry officials had with me on May 11. I hope it's not like the LHINs, where they have unfettered power and are creating, in some areas, tremendous hardship for people in communities where they're proposing to close their emergency rooms and where they have forced them to eliminate outpatient services, which people now have to pay for.

It will be interesting to finally hear the government say why this college supervisor is necessary. Is this Big Brother one more time, and will it again create another level of bureaucracy, as has been created by the LHINs? Is this going to take power away from the elected council and the appointed registrar? Anyway, as this proposal is reviewed, I hope that the minister is going to put a little meat on the bones and provide us with some specific criteria for triggering the appointment of a college supervisor, because I think right now there's just a little bit of confusion, perhaps apprehension and even suspicion as to why this would be necessary.

That wraps up my remarks. As I say, on the whole, the changes that are being recommended are very positive ones. It will allow this government to move forward on a path that we began in order that there be more collaboration between health professionals in the province of Ontario. I look forward to the committee hearings. I think that there will be others who will step forward and make some changes for amendments, and we will certainly look at those amendments. At the end of the day, after we've listened to those who come forward, we would be

prepared to make whatever changes are necessary. I hope that the government will be amenable as well.

So I thank you today. We look forward to further debate, and we also look forward to the committee hearings. As I say, I think that's where we're going to get some excellent feedback, which I hope the government will consider before passage of the bill into law.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Lou Rinaldi): Questions and comments?

M^{me} France Gélinas: I was most interested in the presentation made by the member from Kitchener–Waterloo. She did a good analysis of the content of the bill as well as what is not in the bill, as in the missing pieces that she was able to refer to. It was interesting to see her approach as to the link that exists between an electronic health record and interdisciplinary care. Certainly her analysis was true again that, for interdisciplinary care to be successful, we need to have an electronic health record that is responsive to the teams that work together. This government has, so far, failed miserably to deliver it. The example that she gives from Alberta is certainly something that Ontario could learn from.

It was also interesting for her to talk about the re-branding of the family health network. Between the FHG, the FHN, the family health group, family health network, family health team, we now have enough alphabet to make an entire soup, yet we continue to have basically a group of physicians with very few others. There are a few nurses in there, there are a few nurse practitioners, but to say that they are interdisciplinary care—they're a long way from this and certainly have a long way to go before we have a fully integrated interdisciplinary care team.

I was also interested to see her worries about the assigning of college supervisors. This part needs to be expanded a little bit more so that people know what is supposed to be in the bill and how it will work. I, too, look forward to the committee hearings.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Lou Rinaldi): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: I just want to provide a few comments on the comments made by the member from Kitchener–Waterloo. It is, I guess, heart-warming to say that the member has provided every possible opportunity of expressing the contents of the bill in terms of what it's providing to the public. Let me say that she has raised the comment in terms of the bill in that it provides more access, it will increase efficiency, it's looking towards improving patient safety, and this particular bill is very extensive in that it touches 26 different acts in the Ministry of Health. This bill, I would say, is one of the government's initiatives to bring the health care system into the 21st century by allowing our health care professionals, who are well trained, to use their expertise and training to their fullest potential in serving patients and all Ontarians.

Some of the issues she has raised with regard to some organizations representing, I think, the nurse practitioners, dental hygienists: Those are concerns that we hear on

the government side. I can assure her that in terms of patient safety, which is primary to this government, the government is listening, and at some point in time this is going to be brought forward. It is continuously going to be looked at, and when the government is convinced that patient safety is at the centre of those requests, legislation will be brought forward at that particular time.

This is the government trying to move our health care system forward. It's the right thing to do and we're doing it today, and I'm happy to hear that the member and her party will be looking at the bill and possibly supporting the general intent.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Lou Rinaldi): Further questions and comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm pleased as well to listen to the remarks made by the member from Kitchener-Waterloo, a very formidable Minister of Health. I'm looking forward to her time.

The comments she made certainly draw to attention the importance of this bill. First, from the outset she made the point that, in a general sense, we're supportive, but many of the details are missing.

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All forms of government, basically—starting under, I believe, Frances Lankin, when they did the first study of health care reform, which was really called primary care reform. That primary care reform set about looking at capacity within the acute care system and the necessity to look at ALC—or high level of care—patients and moving them into more appropriate settings. To that extent—I think Ms. Witmer was the Minister of Health at the time—we introduced both the electronic health records systems she referred to as well as the expanded scope of practice for nurse practitioners. In fact, we introduced the family health teams.

I always found it quite interesting, in my time as the parliamentary assistant in that ministry, that I attended, along with Dr. Ruth Wilson, who was the dean of medicine at Queen's—the first team that was formed was quite interesting. The first doctor to join up was Dr. Neil McLeod, Lyn McLeod's husband. Take all the politics out of it, he saw the advantage of collaborative health care that Ms. Witmer referred to. I think the devil here is in the details. You look at all of these various colleges and all of these professions that have to work collaboratively, and sharing the resources under the OHIP funding pot is going to be quite interesting, to see just how far we can move, whether we're going to move to a roster system or whatever else. But any time you tinker with health care, beware that Maude Barlow might be looking on.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Lou Rinaldi): The member for Hamilton East-Stoney Creek.

Mr. Paul Miller: I'd just like to make a point. Mrs. Witmer brought forth a lot of important facts. It seems that there has been a general reluctance by the government to touch the Public Hospitals Act. This is much to the detriment of good decision-making, because some of the things that were brought forward—I had the

privilege a week or two ago of touring a hospital in Hamilton, and at the end of the tour I sat down with some nurse practitioners and had a discussion. They have some concerns. It appears that some of the nurse practitioners in the cities and the larger municipalities will be limited in some of the functions that they can perform. Their fellow nurse practitioners in the smaller communities will be able to do more things within their regimens. I think that could be counterproductive, because if some of those nurse practitioners decide to leave the larger centres and go to a smaller area, they may have to take some further training or retraining to be able to do the same as the nurse practitioners in the smaller communities. So they had some concerns about that.

Also, I guess I'll have the ability to have first-hand exposure to this. My youngest daughter has just about finished her nursing RN and wants to go on to nurse practitioner in the next couple of years, so I'll be able to get some first-hand information about her challenges in the field she's chosen. So I'll be looking forward to further debate on this.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Lou Rinaldi): Now the member for Kitchener has two minutes to respond.

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: I want to thank those people who responded: first of all the member from Hamilton East-Stoney Creek; the member from Nickel Belt, who of course is the NDP critic—I certainly did appreciate her comments, as she does a great job in her role; of course my colleague from Durham, who again is a strong advocate for health care for the people in the Oshawa-Whitby area; and the parliamentary assistant, the member from Scarborough-Rouge River. I was pleased to hear him say that he understands that there are some health professionals who have concerns about the fact that their expansion of the scope of practice hasn't gone far enough and that they would be looking at the feedback that they would get.

But I think at the end of the day, moving forward, we want to make sure that there is continued collaboration among health professionals. We want to make sure that any expansion of the scope of practice takes patient safety first and foremost into consideration. Also, of course, any increased efficiencies that we can find within the health system are a good thing.

I heard the member today talk about all the money that they were spending on health care. I think we need to always keep in mind that it's not the amount of money; it's how well we're spending that money. We need to make sure that we are addressing the needs of people in the province of Ontario. Despite the fact that the government introduced the health tax, many people will say to you that they're not seeing an improvement in care. So at the end of the day, let's make sure that this bill improves health care for all Ontarians.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Lou Rinaldi): Further debate?

M^{me} France Gélinas: I'm pleased to rise before the House this afternoon to add my voice to the debate on Bill 179, the Regulated Health Professions Statute Law Amendment Act. I want to start by saying that we need to

find better titles for our bills because this is a mouthful that doesn't say a whole lot. I would be happy to rename it if my assistance would be welcome.

There is no question that the bill before us, no matter its cumbersome name, is the result of many, many hours and months of hard work. It is essential that our health care system has the ability to adapt in order to best serve the needs of its population: the people of Ontario. It is essential that Ontario is able to take advantage of the full scope of practice that our health professionals can offer. This is what this bill is all about: allowing professionals to practise to their full scope of practice.

It is a shame that it has taken so long for the wide breadth of expertise and skill of so many non-physician health professionals to be acknowledged and hopefully enshrined in legislation. It is for this reason that the New Democrats certainly welcome this legislation. We are happy to be engaging in this discussion today. There are, of course, some concerns that we have regarding this bill, and I'll get into them more specifically in a little while.

However, the issue of greatest concern to us is not what is included in the bill but rather what has been left out of the bill, to be filled in at a later time. The fact that so many of the details have been left to regulation is a serious problem for us. You have to take the leap of faith that the regulation will actually do what you think it will do, but we don't have an opportunity to see it. We don't have an opportunity to put it in legislation. Many stakeholder groups have expressed this, and it is a feeling that New Democrats share. It is awfully hard to offer concrete input or even good or bad criticism when you're not exactly sure what the content of the final document is going to look like.

Before getting into the meat of this discussion, it has to be acknowledged that this is a step forward for Ontarians. It is the product, as I said, of much work. The first person who needs to be acknowledged is Barbara Sullivan and, I would say, everybody else who works with and for HPRAC. Those people have been working for a long, long time gathering the viewpoints of different health professionals, people affected, and putting those into a report. That's the reason we're here today: because of the good folks at HPRAC and Mrs. Sullivan working together to bring in a report that was the basis for this bill.

I also want to take a moment to acknowledge all the regulatory colleges and associations which have put a lot of time and energy into submitting their ideas and reacting to the recommendations of HPRAC that are now before us in this bill. I have to mention that a lot of colleges and associations are disappointed that not all of their recommendations have been included; some of them are barely mentioned or are not mentioned at all in the bill that's in front of us. It is for that dedication of these health professionals to both their various specialties and the general health and well-being of Ontarians that I would like to acknowledge their effort and work.

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There is no question that the bill in front of us has merit. We have been hoping for movement on many of

those issues that Bill 179 addresses for a very long time, for as long as I can remember being in health care, which for me means the last 25 years. Ontario is very lucky to have a wide variety of health professionals. When these professionals are able to work together to their full scope of practice, the result is better care for Ontarians, and the result is also healthier Ontarians.

It is no surprise to anyone that our health care system is in need of reform. The fact of the matter is that still too many Ontarians are living without the proper care that they need. There are, depending on who you ask, between 750,000 to a million Ontarians who do not have access to primary care at all. They don't have a family physician; they don't have a nurse practitioner; they're not attached to a family health team, a community health centre, an aboriginal health access centre. They have nothing. Our health care facilities are often stretched to the limit. Many of our hospitals in Ontario are running regularly at 100% capacity, and sometimes over 100% capacity. That means that every bed in the hospital is full, all of the stretchers are full, and you start hallway nursing.

Communities continue to be without access at many levels of care. Ontario's promise of interprofessional care provided through family health teams has been by and large a disappointment. The fact of the matter is that family health teams are not representative of the entirety of health professionals. They continue to be a primary health care model that sees physicians dominate, and other complementary forms of care, such as nurses and nurse practitioners, continue to be grossly under-represented. To give you an example, for 1,000 physicians, you can find one pharmacist; I would not call this a team. There is yet to be a single physiotherapist hired by a family health team. Family health teams are basically physicians working together, which is a step in the right direction, with a few nurses, a few nurse practitioners, sometimes a dietitian and sometimes a social worker. But that's about where it ends—not exactly the type of interdisciplinary care that Ontario needs.

Ontarians are still in need of community-governed, interdisciplinary primary health care teams that would include physicians, nurse practitioners, nurses, dietitians, social workers, health promoters, community development workers, early childhood educators—and the list goes on and on. Those are the types of teams that can make a difference on the health of a population. By having health promoters and community development workers, they work on health promotion, on primary prevention. All of the chronic diseases share a lot of things in common that can be acted upon at the community level.

If you look at the big four, if you look at healthy weight, healthy eating habits, stopping smoking and exercising regularly, you would have a dramatic impact on chronic disease management, on cancer, on the health of the population. Yet I see very little in our family health teams that is directly targeted at helping people achieve those four changes.

Aside from the failures of the government to implement real comprehensive care, this province is increasingly facing the reality of privatization of health services and the encroachment of the private sector. We all know that it is in Ontario where you find the highest level of private, for-profit long-term-care homes: Over 50% of the long-term-care homes in Ontario are private, for-profit. We are also the province that has the most problems with quality of care in our long-term care. I think there's a link there. It is this growing privatization that is threatening our existing services and reinforcing health inequities among different populations and communities. Where I come from in the north, we all know that the health of aboriginal people and the health of francophones always scores way lower than the health of the average Ontarian. Yet we don't see anything in here to address those inequities.

Those are but a few of the issues that the province is facing with our health care system, and it is in this context that I think we need to understand this bill. It is this context that highlights the pressing need for greater collaboration and co-operation between all health professionals in ensuring that they are able to practise to their full scope. Although a bill like this will not be able to solve all our health care system problems, it is a vitally important step to give professionals the right to practise to their full scope.

In my discussions with many of the regulatory colleges and associations impacted by this bill, there was a theme to our conversations. These colleges and associations are telling us that while the bill is a good first step, it does not go far enough. Much more still needs to be done. There was also a concern across the board about the impact of so much being left to regulation that will be done somewhere, somehow, down the road, don't know when, not exactly sure by whom—a lot of questions left unanswered—and the fact that the systems that are going to be responsible for decisions like new drug approval have gone undefined. No one knows what these will look like, how fast they will work and how responsive to patient care they are going to be. Nobody knows.

I would like to take some of the professions and show you in more detail how the bill will impact, as well as some of the shortcomings of the bill. First, let's talk about the nursing profession. I would say this bill does not go far enough when it comes to nurse practitioners. Nurse practitioners are increasingly being relied on to deliver primary care in this province. This is a good thing, but this must be reflected in their scope of practice.

I am very proud to live in Sudbury, where we had the very first nurse-practitioner-led clinic. The clinic, when it first started, had the mandate to take on patients who had been unattached; that is, patients who did not have a family physician, often for many, many years. They kept statistics, and the patients they see have often not had access to primary care for over five years. A lot of complications can develop. As well, there are often severely sick people with a number of chronic diseases that need to be managed who are being picked up by the nurse practitioners.

Those women—they're mainly women in Sudbury—are doing wonderful work. But in order to provide wonderful care, they need to be able to work to their full scope of practice. It is good that nurses will be able to set or cast a fracture or dislocation of a joint. If they have the proper training, it is certainly something that could be useful. It is good that there will be less limitation on the lab tests and X-rays that are so essential to the work these highly trained health professionals do every single day.

The Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario and the Nurse Practitioners' Association of Ontario have pointed to two blatant problems with the bill: the failure to permit open prescription of medication for nurse practitioners and the failure to permit the authority to admit and discharge patients from hospitals.

If I can take the first one, open prescribing of medication for nurse practitioners: The system that is proposed in Bill 171 is to allow nurse practitioners to prescribe off a list of allowed medications. We already have this. Nurse practitioners are presently limited to a list of drugs that they have to prescribe from. To add a drug to this list is a very long, tedious process. So although new drugs may be better at treating and providing good patient care, it can be months and years before the nurse practitioners are allowed to prescribe them, because they're only allowed to prescribe from a definite list. What this means is that only the drugs on this list will continue to be allowed to be prescribed.

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Nursing groups like the Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario have spoken out against this system. This is the system we have in place right now. This is a system that has been in place for close to 10 years. We have a lot of experience with it, and it doesn't serve the people of Ontario that well.

"RNAO rejects, in the strongest possible terms, the needs for any lists, especially those of an inclusionary nature as was suggested by HPRAC. We firmly believe that these limitations would inhibit" nurse practitioners' "ability to practise within their full scope, and would significantly restrict patient access to timely, progressive drug therapy."

One of the strongest arguments against this model of prescribing is the reality of the speed by which new medications come on to the market. Without broader prescribing abilities, nurse practitioners are not able to prescribe from a list of the latest and often best medicines available because they have not yet been approved, not yet been added to the list. As a province, we are increasingly relying on the care and expertise of nurse practitioners, and this needs to be reflected in their ability to prescribe.

The second issue that nurses are very concerned about is the ability of nurses to admit and discharge patients from hospital. Groups like RNAO were calling on the government to make the necessary changes to the Public Hospitals Act that would have allowed nurses to admit and discharge from hospitals. It seems that there has been a general reluctance to touch the Public Hospitals Act,

much to the detriment of good decision-making and the possibility of improved patient care. Without this added ability, nurse practitioners are lacking a definitively important step in their practice. It is a shame that the government has not moved on this recommendation.

In Sudbury, most of the family physicians do not have admitting privileges, which means that if one of their clients is admitted into the hospital, he is seen by what is called a hospitalist; that is, a doctor who solely works in the hospital. That means that those people don't get to talk to their primary health care provider, to their physician. They don't get the follow-up, the knowledge. They are simply on their own with the hospitalist.

Giving nurse practitioners the right to admit and discharge would help a lot of people. Given that our hospitals are regularly running at capacity, it would only make sense to look for opportunities to assist these facilities and allow nurse practitioners with the proper skill sets—they have to be competent—to make these decisions. I have no doubt that only competent nurse practitioners would go on to make such decisions.

New Democrats would like to see these gaps closed, and we look forward to committee hearings, where nursing representatives will, without a doubt, make their concerns known with recommendations as to how to change things to make the bill better.

Now let's look at dietitians. There have been some important changes to the scope of practice for dietitians in Bill 179. One of the things that Bill 179 has allowed is for the act of skin pricking to check for blood sugar levels. It may seem shocking that dietitians, the health professionals who work so closely with the hundreds of thousands of diabetic patients, were not allowed to carry out this procedure before this bill. The College of Dietitians of Ontario and Dietitians of Canada recommended this change in their submission to HPRAC. We are very pleased to see this change in the bill. It would help the dietitians, as part of an interdisciplinary primary health care team, to better look at and manage the chronic condition that is diabetes, which afflicts so many Ontarians, especially in the First Nations community.

However, there are some even more fundamentally important issues that the dietitians discuss in their submission, and these issues seem to have been left at the door—we cannot find them anywhere. Again, the government has refused to move when it comes to the Public Hospitals Act, where a lot of dietitians practice. Although dietitians are the experts when it comes to nutrition and the nutritional needs of patients, they will continue to lack the ability to directly order nutrition treatment for individuals in hospitals where they are often needed the most.

The College of Dietitians of Ontario and Dietitians of Canada had this to say about the issue: "The absence of support for registered dietitians to order diagnostics and treatment procedures under the public hospitals Act is most concerning. As stated in our submission, and supported by the public consultation, the inability of RDs to directly order nutrition treatments seriously impedes

appropriate patient care in public hospitals. It is the most significant barrier to timely and effective patient care and to effective use of the expertise of RDs. The requirement for a physician's signature on a nutrition care plan does not contribute to inter-professional care. It is an outdated authority mechanism that wastes resources that would be better utilized on meaningful inter-professional dialogue and reviews of complex patient care issues." They go on to say, "Given the evidence of how RDs are increasingly relied on to apply their unique expertise in assessment and nutrition treatment planning, this is an omission that warrants serious consideration to address the inconsistencies between professions."

The College of Dietitians of Ontario and Dietitians of Canada acknowledge that in some specialized circumstances, such as the neonatal unit and complex gastrointestinal diseases, the specialist would remain a physician. However, for the majority of patients, the failure to grant registered dietitians authority simply means a delay in appropriate nutritional provision and will not result in better patient care.

Furthermore, registered dietitians need access to diagnostic services. The submission to the college of dietitians states, in a response to this issue: "Ongoing nutritional care involves monitoring the patient's response to treatment.... The authority to order lab tests to monitor response to treatment is very important to supporting appropriate nutrition care, but without the ability to then order changes to the nutrition treatment, the RD cannot act on the information provided by the laboratory reports."

Here again, New Democrats hope this oversight can be re-examined at the committee stage and this gap closed, so that we, as the public of Ontario, have the opportunity to truly benefit from the scope of practice of our registered dietitians in Ontario.

Let's look at the change of practice in the profession of physiotherapy, a profession that is near and dear to my heart. While Ontario's physiotherapists were pleased with the changes this bill will bring to their profession, they still have a number of important concerns. There are what one could call technical issues or issues of details that require clarification by the ministry to correct any abnormality and to address the potential for future misconstruction and any unintended consequences. It is important, therefore, that the standing committee take time to study the bill in detail and to hear from all direct stakeholders during the hearings.

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There are two main issues with some of the wording—I would call it technical wording—of the bill. With respect to the new authorized act of "administering a substance by inhalation," the way the amendment is written, a physiotherapist's performance of the authorized act requires an order from a physician or from a member of another profession that may perform the controlled act. This is sort of weird, because we don't need legislation to do this. This already happens in all forms of health care settings in Ontario.

The bill says, in paragraph 7, "Administering a substance by inhalation":

"Additional requirement for certain procedures

"(3) A member shall not perform a procedure under paragraph 7..."—which is "Administering a substance by inhalation"—"unless the member has been ordered to perform the procedure by a member of the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario, or a member of any other college who is authorized to perform the procedure."

This language leads me to believe that it appears to assign the order to the member—that is, the physiotherapist—and not the procedure or substance, as in the case for other professions with this act, such as nursing and respiratory therapists, and as recommended by HPRAC. The order was to be attached to the substance, according to the HPRAC report, not to the physiotherapist. So we are not sure how the language as it appears presently in Bill 179 represents any change from what is currently the status for this act for the profession of physiotherapy, where the physiotherapist, as we speak right now, without this act coming into effect, can act by delegation, and has already been doing so for many years.

In the recommendation from HPRAC, the wording associated the order with the substance, and once the substance had been prescribed through an order, then a physiotherapist could administer and adjust the dosage. This was reiterated in the Critical Links report. This would better represent the entry-level competency to administer substances by inhalation—most of the time, it was oxygen—held by all physiotherapists, as noted by HPRAC.

As I say, this part of the bill seems to be technical, but at the end of the day, if physiotherapists still need an order to be able to administer and change the dosage of oxygen therapy, then we're no further ahead, because we're already there.

Under the new act of treating a wound below the dermis, the listing of the intervention could be problematic, since some of this could be considered public domain, such as cleansing and dressing. But for reasons unknown, it presently appears in regulation, on page 27 of the bill. It goes on:

"4. Treating a wound below the dermis using any of the following procedures:

- "i. cleansing,
- "ii. soaking,
- "iii. irrigating,
- "iv. probing,
- "v. debriding,
- "vi. packing,
- "vii. dressing."

Well, cleansing and dressing is something considered to be in the public domain. Why has it been put in a bill, and put in the bill only when physiotherapists are dealing with wounds, not when other professions are dealing with wounds? That's kind of problematic. We're not really sure why this is in there.

Other professions who have this act have the activities that are included in it described in regulation by their college, and that would eliminate any concern that, unintentionally, we are putting into legislation language that is public domain and best described in regulation, not in the actual bill itself. So, although most of the time we want more details in the bill and less in regulation, in this particular instance it's the other way around. Things that should be in regulation are now in the bill, for reasons unknown.

For the changes, we would like clarity on intention regarding the duty of colleges "to provide for a professional liability insurance scheme," and would like to ensure that this does not mean that they would deliver that program.

At this time, in many of the colleges—not only the physiotherapists—the college sets out what must be included in liability and what liability a member should have. The delivery of the program is by others outside of the college—most of the time it's your employer, an association, or sometimes a private insurer—which ensures that there is no conflict of interest between the college and its regulation in this area.

A number of colleges highlighted their concern about the mandatory provision of liability possibly having to be provided by the colleges themselves. New Democrats think that if the college is to set out what must be included in liability and what liability a member should have, then the college should not be the one providing this liability insurance. Colleges were very concerned that this forms a conflict of interest, and they want this issue addressed.

Coming back to physiotherapists: Physiotherapists noted two changes from the HPRAC review for physiotherapists that are not in Bill 179. The first is regulation changes to the Laboratory and Specimen Collection Centre Licensing Act to authorize physiotherapists to order certain lab tests. The second issue is one of concern for the profession as it represents a barrier within the system for the use of professionals to their full scope of practice within the hospital system, including outpatients and triage/screening clinics. This change would allow physiotherapists to initiate or order treatments and diagnostic tests. These changes would require an amendment to the Public Hospitals Act, as was recommended by HPRAC in their review of the scope of practice for physiotherapists. We hope that the government is willing to amend the Public Hospitals Act in order for these necessary changes to happen.

When I took the briefing from Dr. Joshua Tepper about this bill, that was a question that I asked directly. Even in his slide, we could see that the Public Hospitals Act needed to be changed in order for professionals to practise to their full scope of practice within hospitals, which are locations where a lot of care is being provided to people in Ontario.

So, profession after profession all say the same thing: How come the Public Hospitals Act is not being modified to allow them to practise to this new scope of practice

that will be available to them if and when Bill 179 is passed? But it's now all for nothing if none of this you can do once you work in a hospital.

Now let's look at midwifery. I'm always pleased to note that it was a New Democratic government that recognized, regulated and funded midwifery practices for the first time in Ontario. In general, midwives are happy with the changes to their scope of practice. Midwifery is still what you would consider a relatively new regulated profession, but even in the short time span that Ontarians have had access to the services of fully funded midwives, it is clear that they occupy a unique and central place in health care services in this province. The long waiting lists of women and families who want to have their babies delivered by midwives is certainly a testimony to their success.

The main concern that midwives continue to have regarding the changes proposed in Bill 179 is regarding the prescription of drugs. The ability of midwives to practise to their full scope of practice requires access to drugs as simple as antibiotics. While midwives were happy that there has been a recognition that the current system of drug approval for non-physician providers is extremely slow and cumbersome, they remain concerned that the system will not be adequately improved. It would seem that the new drug approval will be done through a panel of experts. However, the composition of this panel, the timeline under which it will be operating, and the principles governing their work remain unknown. Here again, we are asking midwives to support this bill while taking a leap of faith that things will suddenly become clear in regulations. Why not make them clear in legislation?

This is an issue that was a central concern of midwives. However, it was shared by many other colleges and professions. New Democrats hope to hear the government address some of these issues during the second reading debate.

I'd like to say a few words about remote prescribing, which is also included in this bill. I must say that New Democrats have serious concerns with the government's plan for remote dispensing machines in Ontario. I am concerned about the motivation and underlying goals of this aspect of the bill. While the minister is fond of talking about these machines as tools to increase access to pharmaceuticals in remote communities, I have yet to see anything in the proposed legislation that would ensure or even promote improved access in underserved communities. I have been told that the decision of a machine location would be left as a business location. How can this government be leaving such an important issue to a question of corporate profit and gain?

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Furthermore, these machines will only be equipped to dispense a certain number of medications. How will this government ensure that the medication in this machine represents a spectrum that health professionals prescribe from? Furthermore, how will the government ensure that the possible profits that could be reaped by giving phar-

maceutical companies exclusive access to these machines will not be allowed to take precedence over the health care needs of the people of Ontario?

This is a concerning path that we are heading down. It is a path that has the opportunity for important gain, but it is one that requires close monitoring and control. I am very concerned that the government seems to be signalling that this decision will be left to the province's private sector.

I must say that I had the opportunity to have a long conversation with Don Waugh. He is the CEO, co-founder and chairman of the board of PharmaTrust, the business that is bringing those dispensing kiosks to market. Of course, I'd like to support an Ontario-based new industry, especially in this time of economic uncertainty—recession, I would even call it. But as I shared with Don, I have some serious issues.

I haven't lived very long in Toronto, but I've lived here long enough to know that if you walk in any direction for five minutes, you will come across a pharmacy. How is adding a dispensing kiosk in downtown Toronto increasing access? When I talk about people who have problems with access to pharmacy services, I talk about the people of Nickel Belt. Ninety per cent of the land mass covered by Nickel Belt doesn't have access to a pharmacy. Pharmacy services are something that we struggle for. Those people have access problems. I'm sorry, but downtown Toronto does not have an access problem to drugs. It's a five-minute walk. Try it; I guarantee that you will find a pharmacy, lots of them open until 11 o'clock at night and some of them open 24/7. To me, this is great access.

The other point that troubles me is that many a smaller community tries really hard to bring a pharmacist and a pharmacy to their community, and some of them are successful. Most of the time they are small, independent pharmacies because the level of population will never allow this pharmacy to be economically viable under the big pharma brand. But the people who choose to settle there make a big difference in the health of the population. There is nothing like seeing your pharmacist at Johnny's soccer game to make you realize, "Hmm, maybe I have to go renew this prescription, maybe I should take it till the end and maybe I should be more compliant with my drug therapy." I don't think that seeing a dispensing machine on the side of a rink or a soccer field is about to happen. This human connection in small rural communities is a big part of increasing access, and a dispensing kiosk is not about to make it.

As I was saying, there are some problems with access to drugs in my riding. I was the executive director of the community health centre; we sponsored the nursing station in Gogama. There is no pharmacy in Gogama, and there probably will never be one, because the population is too small. What we have now is that we fax the prescriptions up to Timmins, the Timmins pharmacy packages them, puts them on the bus and they go to Le Vagabond, which is the one and only restaurant in Gogama. The nurse goes to the restaurant, picks them up

and dispenses them to the people whose prescriptions have come. Those are people who have access problems, and I can't see how a kiosk is going to help those people—first of all, because of the limited amount of drugs.

Unfortunately, there are a lot of people in remote northern communities who have narcotics prescriptions much too high for my liking, but that is still the way life is in small, remote communities in northern Ontario, where access to primary care and pharmacy care is very hard to come by. So when I hear that those kiosks are going to increase access, allow me to be skeptical. They certainly are a danger to small communities that might be successful in recruiting a pharmacist to come to their community, open up a little pharmacy and be there for the people of that community. Once you have a kiosk there, you will never be able to recruit a pharmacist and all of the benefits that come with that.

Should the needs of Ontarians in remote and rural communities take precedence over all else? I'm guessing not. What is the government's plan for ensuring that this legislative change will actually have an outcome of better care for all Ontarians, including people from northern, remote and small communities? All of these questions are left unanswered. I hope greater light is shed on this issue, and that the interests of Ontarians take precedence over the interest of profits.

There are a few general issues I would like to conclude on. I also am very concerned about the numerous issues that are going to be left to regulation. This is something we are seeing more and more with every big bill this government brings forward. We saw this with the Toxics Reduction Act, and we are at it again here.

This is a very disturbing trend for a number of reasons. First, it discourages an open and articulate dialogue on the issue. It is very hard to make concrete suggestions when you are commenting on a regulation that has not yet been defined. It allows the government to be applauded for taking some steps forward, while actually ensuring they have an escape hatch to accomplish or change absolutely nothing if they decide to down the road. There are many, many questions in this bill and there are some very concerning gaps with the way it stands right now.

New Democrats look forward to this bill going to committee, where the appropriate colleges, associations, advocacy groups and patients' groups will have a chance to comment on the content of this bill and any oversights they have identified. We hope this government is willing to re-evaluate its decision to place the patient and health care needs of Ontario at the highest priority and will make the changes that are necessary.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Lou Rinaldi): The member from Scarborough—Rouge River.

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: I welcome the remarks of the member from Nickel Belt. It's nice to hear the comments she provided on the bill. They were extensive and well researched. Obviously, her experience in the health care field shows quite predominantly in her presentation. It was also nice to hear the member say it is a step in the

right direction that the government is bringing forward this piece of legislation which allows health care professionals to practise the full scope of training and experience they have to offer Ontarians.

The bill itself seeks to strengthen health care professionals' regulatory system in order to enhance patient safety. That is the centre of the bill and the main focus that the government has looked at in bringing forward this legislation.

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We know many of the organizations would like us to do more. We are listening. We've heard them. But at this point in time the changes we're making are because the government feels satisfied that patient safety is at the centre of everything and we can make the changes that are coming forward. All other changes will be under constant review, and at some point in time, when the government feels that the colleges have been able to do the things that we need to make sure that patient safety is at the centre of any particular change, we'd be most happy to address those changes.

I would say to you that this particular bill is a shift in our health care system to encourage the team-based approach that the member spoke about. That's one of the key elements of this particular bill. The whole bill itself is to improve access to patients and Ontarians.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Lou Rinaldi): Further questions and comments?

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I'm pleased to comment on the well-researched, prepared speech on Bill 179 by the member from Nickel Belt. I don't think there's any question that the members of the House and our party would support a piece of legislation that is going to allow nurse practitioners and other practitioners in the health care field to expand their scope of service. However, I would hate to think that Bill 179 becomes an excuse and opportunity for the government to stop moving forward on recruiting and keeping family health doctors in our system. The reality is that in order to access specialists in Ontario, you need the ability to go to your family physician first and get that referral. While Bill 179 has some valid opportunities and benefits, it does not preclude the government's responsibility to continue to encourage family physicians to practise in Ontario.

I don't want to see us lose focus when we talk about Bill 179 and forget about the communities like Shelburne, Grand Valley, Orangeville and Bolton that on a daily basis are calling my office and asking where they should go because they do not have a family physician for their health care needs. We must keep our eye on the ball and focused on that goal, because ultimately that is how Ontario will be kept stronger and Ontarians will benefit from the changes that are coming forward with Bill 179.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Lou Rinaldi): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Paul Miller: I would like to lend my compliments to my colleague from Nickel Belt. She has extensive knowledge in the medical field with her 25

years' experience involved with hospitals, and I value her opinion. She has brought forth, as the member said, many good points.

But there are a couple of areas of this bill that have been totally ignored, some of our professionals—and that would be, in my opinion, chiropractic. It's mentioned in just one line in the bill. Chiropractors play a big role. They are preventive disease specialists. They play a major role in my community. I think when this government deregulated chiropractic and physiotherapy, it was the biggest mistake we made in Ontario. These professions are very important to the well-being of individuals, not only in preventive but recovery stages. They have been limited, to say the least, in their ability to take part in some of these health teams that have been formed by the LHINs. So I would like to see chiropractic and physiotherapy back on the list of coverage by OHIP for the benefit of our populace.

To limit the nurse practitioners to certain drugs—I don't know what a nurse practitioner is going to do in the Northwest Territories when she has the ability to get the drug or give it to a patient and she's limited on what she can do, and she has to contact physicians in the south or somebody far away to get permission to do it when that person could be in rough shape and requiring it right away. I think there are a lot of things that have to be adjusted, so I'll be looking forward to debate in committee.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Lou Rinaldi): Further questions and comments?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: I would like to say that I very much appreciate the opportunity to comment on the remarks that were made by the member from Nickel Belt. I do respect her in her profession and I think that she brings some important points to the conversation.

I would also like to speak to the fact that when we talk about improving access to primary care services, we in this Legislature all know how important that is for all of us, and especially for our constituents. I was particularly heartened last week when our government announced that we were again increasing medical school spaces. That is good news for people across Ontario—the first government to do that in many, many years.

The purpose of this legislation is to expand access to health services for people across Ontario. It also recognizes the particular training and abilities of people who have made commitments to health care professions across the province. We are recognizing and respecting that they have training that enables them and gives them the qualifications to make determinations and decisions to assist patients when they need assistance, beyond a doctor's assistance. If they're a nurse practitioner or a dental hygienist, or the many other professions that are identified here—midwives, dietitians and physiotherapists, health professions in their own right, whose abilities, in my view, are recognized.

The member recognized the work of Barbara Sullivan and the HPRAC people, and I certainly concur with that. I do look forward to what is going to be debated at committee on this.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Lou Rinaldi): The member from Nickel Belt has up to two minutes to respond.

M^{me} France Gélinas: I will respond in order, starting with the member from Scarborough—Rouge River. Yes, I have said that the bill is a step in the right direction, and I believe in my words: It is a step in the right direction. The bill has the possibility to increase the scope of practice, which will increase access for the people of Ontario, and that will be a good thing for the professionals, who get to work within their scope of practice, and the people of Ontario, who benefit from their care.

I also agree with the member from Dufferin—Caledon: The expansion of the scope of practice is what's at the core of this bill and is something that needs to be supported, but not to the detriment of continuing to recruit and retain physicians for the people of Ontario. Her party has mentioned many times that close to a million people in Ontario do not have access to primary care, and those people need and deserve access just like everybody else. So certainly, as we move forward with this bill, it doesn't mean that everything else in primary care stops or takes a backseat.

To the member from Hamilton East—Stoney Creek: Certainly the members of the chiropractic association and the college were very disappointed that they did not see their scope of practice change in this bill. They have written a letter to the Minister of Health. I actually got a copy of the response to Dr. Brosseau today in my mail, and I see that they will be considered at a time yet undefined for expanding their scope of practice. But they were sorely disappointed. It was the same thing with the naturopathic doctors, who did not see their scope of practice change.

I would like to thank the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs for her remarks. Yes, it is a question of improving access, and this bill will do that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Lou Rinaldi): Further debate?

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: It's a pleasure to have an opportunity to speak for a few minutes on this bill. I see the bill that we are debating today as a natural evolution of our health care system, and an important part in that evolution, because it involves a lot of creativity. We could have taken the old approach and just continued spending money on things that already exist or we could start changing some of those things and be innovative with it. I think that's what we're doing in this act, in general. People have spoken about specifics, and I'll say a few words about them in my limited time here, but the overall theme that I get here is the creativity and expertise being used so that people who are trained to do certain things are able to do them and are not frustrated by legislation or regulation.

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The first thing I wanted to say briefly is that we spend a lot of money on health care in Ontario. In general, our health care funding has grown by 45% since 2003, and that equals \$13.2 billion. The 2009 budget invests \$42.6

billion in health care. That's almost \$2 billion in growth from last year.

Hospitals: The funding for hospitals in Ontario has increased from \$10.9 billion in 2003-04 to \$15.4 billion in 2009-10. That's a 37% increase. This year alone, \$617 million is being spent for hospitals. This includes a 2.1% increase in the overall base funding formula to meet the service requirements of hospitals.

Nurses: We've hired over 10,000 more nurses since we came into office. The 2009 budget reaffirms our commitment to nurses, and we're hiring 900 more this year. The 2009 budget reaffirms our \$2-billion, three-year commitment to implement eHealth initiatives, including the creation of eHealth records by 2015. I know that earlier, a member from the opposition spoke, saying, "Why don't we spend money on the eHealth program?" and we are; we are investing in that, and with a significant amount of money, but it's going to take time to get that in place.

The 2009 budget renews our commitment for the following: \$223 million for aging at home, and that's part of a \$1.1-billion package for aging at home in general; \$40 million is being spent for high-growth hospitals. Also, we're investing \$35 million over the next two years to create 22 nurse-practitioner-led clinics in addition to the three already announced, and there will be 50 more family health teams planned over the next two years.

The pie is only so large, and the part of it that's going to health care is getting larger and larger. This government also has to be involved in and responsible for things like education, the environment, agriculture and so many other ministries here that require funding, money and transportation—the list goes on and on and on—but health care seems to be eating up a lot of that money. We just can't throw more money at it; the solution is to become creative about it. This act is very, very creative in what it does because it's simple; it's simple, and it says, "Do you know what? If you're a nurse practitioner and you're trained in how to set a cast or fix up someone who has a broken arm, a fracture or a dislocation, then do that work. If you are able to do a diagnostic ultrasound, then do that kind of work." If a pharmacist knows what type of drug is best used, then they're allowed to do that kind of work, because they're taught that at pharmacy school. If they need to prick or lance the skin to educate a patient, they can do that.

Physiotherapists, as was mentioned earlier by my colleague from the NDP, are now allowed to tell patients their diagnoses; they can treat a wound; they can insert an instrument, hand or finger into certain body openings for assessment or rehabilitation of pelvic musculature; and order certain forms of diagnostic ultrasounds.

Midwives: More powers are given to them. They're now allowed to give suppository drugs; they can place a tube in the nose or mouth of a newborn; and they can take blood samples from fathers and donors. I've had friends who have utilized midwife service and had a birth at home. They've had nothing but good words to say about it.

Dietitians are allowed to prick skin to check a patient's blood reading. Medical radiation technologists—and this is one of my favourites, because when you go for an X-ray, the person giving the X-ray often says, "I can only do this or that," or "Stand here," and "Stand there." They're very limited in what they can do; again, everything is forced back up to the doctor. But now the medical radiation technologists, on the order of a physician, are able to perform procedures below the skin, like giving a needle; they can suction a tracheotomy; they can put contrast media into certain body openings and artificial openings in the body. They can put an instrument, hand or finger past certain body openings and artificial openings in the body.

It goes on with chiroprodists and podiatrists, who can give patients certain substances by inhalation; dental hygienists can prescribe, mix, sell or dispense certain drugs; dentists can sell or mix drugs; nurse practitioners and midwives can also give a patient a substance or dispense, mix and sell certain drugs; pharmacists, as I said, can prescribe certain drugs; physiotherapists can give certain substances by inhalation; and respiratory therapists can give a patient, independently, certain substances by inhalation.

So we're letting these people who are trained in these professions do what they were trained to do, which frees up the doctors. I don't know how other members feel, but sometimes when you go to a doctor's office and you are in the waiting room, you see people there with documents. The documents sometimes are passport documents or other kinds of forms, and all they want is the doctor to sign them. I've spoken to my own family doctor and he does get a little bit irritated by the fact that it takes him away from practising medicine instead. Oftentimes he spends a lot of time, because he's in an area where there's a large new immigrant population and that service needs to be dealt with, and people naturally go to the doctor. But here we're able to give work to others in the medical profession and free up the doctor to do what the doctor does best: Let her or him take care of a sick patient and focus solely on that.

I had my own personal experience a few years ago where I had a bleeding nose and it just wouldn't stop bleeding. It wasn't caused by a punch or anything; it was just bleeding. It just started on its own. I went to the emergency out in Scarborough General Hospital, a fine hospital, but it wasn't an emergency so I had to wait and wait. Finally, when I spoke to the doctor, I asked him why it took so long. I just wanted to know. I said, "I know it's not your fault. What's the problem?" And I remember very well what the doctor said to me: "You know what? I don't need more doctors here right now. I don't. The problem is, I wish that my support staff could have the power to do more, that I could focus on being a doctor. I need to be able to pass on instructions to my nurses, to my technicians and to others who support me so that they can do the work that I'm doing right now. I'm running around ordering X-rays. I'm out ordering all sorts of other things and I'm having to set casts and

things of that nature." Now, with nurses being able to do so and with technicians and others being able to order the X-rays, and some of the other people that I mentioned earlier being able to do what they can do, the doctors are freed up and they can focus solely on doing their job.

That's a significant expenditure, because we know that it's expensive to have doctors, it's expensive to have and run an emergency clinic and it's expensive to run health care in general. Costs keep going up, drugs cost more, and the machinery that is being used is more sophisticated and costs more as well. By the way, in the past few years we've added significantly to the number of MRIs that we have in this province, and knee replacements, hip replacements and all sorts of other services, especially those towards seniors—I've had many come to my own office and say how they were pleased that the service they needed and received was dealt with in an appropriate, very quick fashion.

So why do we need this legislation, beyond what I've said? The key component of this plan is to ensure that the right number and mix of appropriately educated professionals are available now and in the future to meet the needs of Ontarians, identifying and removing legislative and regulatory barriers that limit the ability of regulated health professionals to practise in their full scope of practice. So once these barriers that I spoke about earlier are removed, it allows individuals to carry out the job they need to do.

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The legislation will promote better and fuller use of our health human resources. Improved partnerships and teamwork are expected to help health care professionals manage increasing workloads, decrease duplication and lower wait times. So it's a win-win situation: It's a win situation for the patient and a win situation for the medical provider, whether they be a doctor or one of the other individuals listed here.

Just as a quick side note with regard to the chiropractors and physiotherapists, I have the greatest of respect for them. I know that we did make certain changes with respect to chiropractors and physiotherapists, but we also made significant improvements in recognizing Chinese medicine, acupuncturists, even massage therapists. There are naturopaths out there as well. Some people go to naturopaths to get their services. We have recognized a lot of this and are bringing it into the mainstream, because people utilize some of these services. They work. I even know of hockey players who get acupuncture if their back or their neck stiffens up, and they say that it works.

As our minister mentioned earlier, the number of medical school spaces is increasing; we're actually allowing space for more doctors. So we're not decreasing the number of doctors; we're actually increasing the number of doctors who will be available in this province. There should be no misunderstanding about that. Some people think that we want to have fewer doctors, and that's not the case. We've opened up more spaces in the schools that teach medicine here in Ontario.

As I said earlier, health care is our largest expenditure. It's an expense that's almost out of control, that's difficult to keep a handle on and that continues to grow and grow. The government is faced with the option of either just throwing money at the existing system or changing it. What we've done here, and what I really like here, is we've decided to take the approach of changing that system in a way where we amend several acts. Bill 179, right here, says it's an act "to amend various Acts related to regulated health professions and certain other Acts." So it looks at a number of acts where the medical profession is involved, and it gives certain powers to those who didn't have those powers before.

In closing, I just want to say a few more words. In a sense, we're going back to the way things were done a long, long time ago, when one thinks about it. Pharmacists were called apothecaries. I remember that from English in school. Shakespeare liked to use that word. When we had to read Shakespeare at school, I'd always end up getting lost at that point, because I didn't know what the heck an apothecary was. An apothecary was more than just a pharmacist. That person could provide all sorts of additional services, including dispensing medicine and even, in some cases, doing surgery. We're not going all the way to allowing surgery. It has now grown to become "pharmacist"; in Shakespeare's day, it was called "apothecary."

We have pharmacists nowadays, and they were limited until this point, until this legislation came forward, in doing what they do. We're allowing them to do more, just like the apothecaries had a lot to do. So in a way it's kind of evolved that we've gone that way.

In the old days, who ran a lot of the hospitals? If you look around here in Toronto and in other parts of Ontario, a lot of them were run by nuns or by church groups and other religious institutions. They not only administered them, but they were in the rooms and they were assisting in whatever way they could. We can think of all sorts of them.

In my own riding of Scarborough Southwest, Providence Healthcare was formed by the Sisters of St. Joseph, and now it has become a major medical institution that provides all sorts of services for seniors. It's one of the larger institutions in Toronto, if not Ontario. The same with Scarborough General Hospital just outside my riding: That also was formed by a group of nuns. We've come a long way from there, but we're going back to the basics, which is what they did. Maybe they were creative. They used their creativity and figured out ways to make things work. They learned what medicines worked, which ones didn't, and they applied systems that worked for that time period back then, in the 1950s and before then.

We're into a very high-technological period right now, and as we move into that high-technological period where a drug can cost so much or a machine can cost so much or a doctor can cost so much, it's really important that we have in place all the right checks and balances. I think this bill does it, and I'm extremely proud to support it here today.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Lou Rinaldi): Questions and comments?

Mr. Norm Miller: I'm pleased to have the opportunity to offer some comments on the speech made by the member from Scarborough Southwest on Bill 179, An Act to amend various Acts related to regulated health professions and certain other Acts. This bill is really about scope of practice and expanding the scope of practice for certain regulated health professionals like midwives, pharmacists and nurse practitioners.

I might point out that in the case of nurse practitioners, the riding of Parry Sound-Muskoka is very well served and in fact is a good model for much of rural and northern Ontario, where we have six nursing stations that have a nurse practitioner looking at providing the primary health care for the people. There's one in Rosseau, there's one in Whitestone, there's one in Britt-Byng Inlet, Pointe au Baril, Moose Deer Point First Nation and also up in the Port Loring-Argyle region. I suspect the riding of Parry Sound-Muskoka probably has more nursing stations than any other riding in the province. I can tell you, having been to events at those nursing stations, that the people who are served by them are very happy indeed.

This bill is about expanding the scope of practice. It is very specific. I'm of course not a medical expert, but I would think providing services close to home by those able to do them in a safe way is a smart way to be moving: a little bit less of the gatekeeper mentality for the doctors but allowing some of the other health practitioners to do their job. No doubt with the shortage of doctors we have in the province of Ontario and the need for health care, this should certainly provide more health services for people in a way that's successful.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Lou Rinaldi): Questions and comments?

M^{me} France Gélinas: It is my pleasure to give a few comments to the member from Scarborough Southwest. Certainly it is clear that the overarching goal of the bill is to increase the scope of practice to a list of regulated health professionals in Ontario. I think everybody recognizes this. It is also clear that, if and when passed, this bill will increase access to primary care to the people of Ontario, because those people are going to be able to practise to their full scope.

He talked about certain health professionals in particular. If we look at pharmacists, pharmacists won't have the right to prescribe, but they will be allowed to renew prescriptions. As the member said, pharmacists spend a lot of time learning about drugs, and they are certainly the most knowledgeable health care providers when it comes to drugs, drug interactions and all of the theory and knowledge that has to go with this. Now people in Ontario will be able to have better access to all of that knowledge regarding drugs by the different pharmacists.

He gave the example of physiotherapists who will be allowed to order some MRIs and order a few tests within their scope of practice. As always, like I said before, the

devil will be in the details as to how it will be rolled out into regulation to actually make it possible for the people of Ontario to benefit from what this bill is trying to do. It's a step in the right direction with still lots of unknowns.

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The Acting Speaker (Mr. Lou Rinaldi): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Mario Sergio: I'd like to add my comments to the debate today, and especially on the comments by the member from Scarborough Southwest.

I have to say I'm very pleased when I hear the comments from both sides of the House that this is something good and it's something that has to come. It's not only the beginning of something good, but I think, in the words of the member from Scarborough Southwest, it's an innovative way, if you will, of dealing with all the pressure that we are getting today, especially on this most important issue of the total health aspects that we are dealing with. Perhaps there is no other more important issue than health care and education, which our government has been stressing since coming to power in 2003.

There is no debate that we have to have trained, qualified people to meet the ever-increasing needs and demands of our people today. We have an increasing population and increasing needs, and of course the government is in a position where we have to address situations like this not only from the professionals—the doctors, the nurses, those providing services in the various agencies and clinics. I don't have to tell you that we have just dealt with and we are still dealing with—and while this bill will proceed to receive public hearings—the aging-at-home strategy, which is a big part of the health care system.

Again, the government is being very innovative, and it's the proper time to come up with a solution like this when we see the ever-increasing needs, especially of those people who need care at home. I think it's a wonderful way of doing that. The aging-at-home strategy is a very timely one, and I'm going to support the bill when the time comes.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Lou Rinaldi): Further questions and comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: The member from Scarborough Southwest made a number of decent points, and it's good to see the Legislature today being somewhat in agreement, certainly with the intention of the legislation. All of the speakers so far have said they would be supportive, but the devil is in the detail is basically what they've said.

Change is always important, provided that there's an end result that's clearly explained in the public's mind. If it's better patient service and safer patient service, I think we're all unanimous in support. What I'm suspicious of—and with your indulgence Mr. Speaker, I'll be speaking next, so I will draw out a few things where there could be some concerns raised.

I've listened carefully today to the parliamentary assistant as well as our critic, Elizabeth Witmer, as well

as the critic from Nickel Belt for the NDP. All of their comments were quite direct and specific and did add value to the discussion. I've talked to a few people since this bill was introduced in May, just a short time ago, but we would know that there was a broad discussion stretching from late 2008 on the regulated health professions consultation group. Any of these changes, I'm sure, will be met with a bit of territorial disagreement on who gets the money.

At the end of the day, if we keep patient services and patient safety in mind, delivering health care in a somewhat different manner is important, and we would be in agreement with that, but again, we'll have to make sure that there are public hearings and that the consultations are listened to and indeed there are amendments brought forward by all parties in the House in trying to get this right.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Lou Rinaldi): The member from Scarborough Southwest has two minutes to reply.

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: I just want to thank the members from Parry Sound–Muskoka, Nickel Belt, York West and Durham for their comments.

Again, we all know this is going to committee. When it does go to committee after our debate here, there probably will be quite a bit of discussion on some of the details. The member from Nickel Belt has used the term "the devil is in the details." We do hope that we get this right. I know that the government is committed to doing this as best as possible. We've seen it work already in a lot of the health care initiatives that we've undertaken so far. I know that from talking to a lot of seniors in my area. One came in the other day who had cataract surgery done and was really happy that it was done in a quick and efficient fashion, not having to wait very long to get it done. We're doing a lot of these kinds of things, and hopefully this act will allow more of this to happen.

I think everyone has spoken to the fact that this bill is about access to health care. One of the things about getting early access to health care is that it allows for prevention of any kind of illness. The sooner you can get to someone—sometimes it's hard to get to a doctor when someone's not feeling well, but if they can get to a pharmacist or physiotherapist, then their problem can be diagnosed earlier. That is a big part of saving the costs of going in to see a doctor and getting tests ordered and X-rays ordered and all sorts of other blood tests perhaps ordered, which take a lot of time and a lot of money. That's a key part, I think, and a key theme that seems to be running through a lot of this. We even have set up, in this government, the Ministry of Health Promotion to promote health and positive ways of staying healthy. I know that the minister has worked hard on that.

I'm pleased to support this bill and I look forward to its debate in committee.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Lou Rinaldi): Further debate?

Mr. John O'Toole: I certainly want to start by saying that Bill 179 is an omnibus bill. It's a bill that is long on

objectives but short on detail. In fact, it amends 25 different acts. I'll touch only on a couple of them in the very limited time that I've been allowed to speak. That's the problem here. We're going to change the world here, and I want to—I always like to start by putting things in a bit of a historical perspective. The reason the history is important is, if you don't learn from history, you're doomed to repeat it.

We all know that the health care system in Ontario is the most important and probably the most expensive publicly funded component of the budget of Ontario. The budget for this coming year is about \$108 billion, and of that the health care portion would be around 46%; that's my understanding. I think it's important to show here that there has been a lot of money allocated to health care. Let's just have a look. I'm looking at the budget here. This isn't a prop, Mr. Speaker; this is my annotated version of the budget. I'm looking at page 96, for those listening today.

Where does some of this money come from? Do you know the Canada Health Act? It's important to look at that. In the Canada Health Act, the presumption was that there would be the five principles—accessible, affordable, all of these things. But the key thing was, the presumption was that it would be funded in proportion basically from the federal government—at one time, at 50%; 50% of the dollars would be federal and 50% under that agreement would be provincial. It turns out that that agreement has been breached, basically since 1993, when the NDP and the federal government at the time under, I guess, Paul Martin yanked out tons of money.

Let's get the history straight here. The same as they modified the EI, employment insurance—they hacked the insurance entitlements out. Now Ignatieff is kind of forcing them back—but I want to stay on track here. It's important to do that. New money this year from the federal government: In the federal budget, it shows up on page 93 as transfer payments. It's fairly important; let's look at it. Government of Ontario—to the province of Ontario, Canada health transfers: They were about \$7 billion. Now they're \$9.7 billion; almost \$10 billion coming from the feds.

Here's an interesting line. Canada social transfers. This is the CHST. These all, really, come into the health venue. It's \$4 billion. Actually, there's new money. There's money here called wait time reduction strategy, about \$400 million. There's a huge component of this money that comes from the federal government.

Let's be honest about it. Most of the new money here that they're committing is federal money. They're taking credit. They're starting to sound like David Miller announcing he's going to buy \$1.5 billion worth of transit vehicles, but the money is all federal money. They've got to be straightforward here. We want to get there, and we want to give the people who are paying for it the credit they deserve.

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Now, putting the thing in perspective, health care in Ontario—I've often listened to Maude Barlow speak; I

always find it entertaining—there's no one in Ontario who wants to destroy the health care system, but we should know that about 50% of health care today is private. Oh, that's the dangerous word. When I say "private," all oral health is private today. If you don't have a plan, you're paying out of your wallet. Chiropractic—I'm just going to go through them. Anything from the shoulders up basically is private. Hearing problems: Basically, you pay. Your hearing aids, you pay for all that stuff. You pay for hearing tests. They're not covered. Oral health, counselling, mental health—most of that is private.

Drugs: The cost of drugs is very large and expanding at about 15% a year. If you don't have a drug plan at work, you're paying with your wallet. It's not covered. There is a plan called the Trillium drug plan and other kinds of plans that are income-contingent. If you have a low income you can apply through the Trillium drug plan and get funding. You may have to pay the first \$500 or \$5,000, but—so you've got drugs.

Let's put it in perspective. Let's get all of the cards on table. This is the government, the McGuinty government, that promised not to raise taxes. The first thing they did after the 2003 election was called the health tax. They tried to call it a health premium or something. They took \$3 billion more under the guise of health care out of taxpayers' pockets—\$3 billion they committed to health care, they said, and you should ask yourself, is health care any better in Ontario? Is it easier in an emergency room to get to a doctor? Do you have a family doctor? Are drugs any more affordable? There's \$3 billion you're paying, and the system is no better than it was prior to that.

So I've outlined for you a couple of things. First of all, they've raised the tax on health care by \$3 billion. They've got about \$5 billion in brand new money from the federal government, and half of health care is private anyway. You're paying out of your wallet.

The next thing they did, basically—I'm getting into the content of the bill a bit more—is the government at the same time, in around 2004, delisted physiotherapy, which was, once upon a time, covered in hospitals and out of hospitals, to a certain level. They delisted chiropractic services. So they increased the taxes and they reduced services.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Eye exams.

Mr. John O'Toole: Yes, and a third one is optometry, as my colleague is telling me. Optometrists in my riding—for instance I was talking to Darryl Workman, a very young, well-educated, professional doctor of optometry, who was telling me that he was very concerned that we had passed a bill—Elizabeth Witmer I believe was the minister at the time—which allowed a change in scope of practice under the college of optometrists which allowed a function called the TPAs. The TPAs—I have a little note on here; I had to look it up—were the therapeutic procedure, and that procedure would allow optometrists—

Interruption.

Mr. John O'Toole: Just press the button—it would allow them to administer certain drugs to the eyes, and they're topical. Now, they're still unable to do that. I think what's important is the—

Mr. Mike Colle: Throw him out.

Mr. John O'Toole: Just a moment here. It's actually my colleague's. Pay attention to what I'm saying and you'll improve the bill.

The TPAs themselves are still not enforced. Many people don't have access to optometrists as they once did.

In this bill, I can tell you right now that I have suspicions. Under those three groups that we talked about that they delisted, they're trying to make up with them again under physiotherapy, chiropractic and optometry. If you look under this bill, they're amending 25 different acts. Let's look through what they've done here. This is the important content part. It's fine to look at these bills. They're all written in legalese, and unless members read them, they're really getting hoodwinked. So right here under—just a minute: health care, Health Insurance Act, massage, medical act, Nursing Act, midwifery—optometry. The bill amends the Optometry Act. The act "is amended to expand the scope of regulations which the college council is authorized to make, subject to the approval of the Lieutenant Governor in Council." So they're still working on that TPA allocation, is what they're really doing. That's the scope of practice.

Most of the detail of this bill, when you get into the content of Bill 179, deals with the scope of practice within the professions, and there are 25 different acts. I could list them all here. Scope of practice becomes very contentious. In a nutshell, what it does—and we've had a few speakers today, especially the member from Nickel Belt, who is very proficient on this file, as is Ms. Witmer, who is very proficient on it as well. She knows what this is about. This is very controversial. Don't ever kid yourself. Chiropractors have a lot of training. Pharmacists have a lot of training. I think that in many cases they're underutilized in the overall delivery of health care.

To stick to the nurses' role, which has been mentioned by almost every speaker here today, the nurse practitioners' scope of practice was first changed by our government under Elizabeth Witmer. We first started the collaborative health model, and it was called the family health team. They're called family health networks today, and I think the member from Nickel Belt used these—there were enough alphabets to make an alphabet soup, you said in your remarks. Those are the same objectives, as all three parties have the same objectives, of working towards collaborative health. The problem is, who gets the money? In other words, if you don't give a billing code to the nurse practitioner, if you want the nurse practitioner to work in a subordinate role to the doctor, you're going to have a problem here, Houston, because it's all power and control, and it comes down to the money; it really does. If they get part of the OHIP piece, the \$8 billion or \$9 billion in the OHIP fund—it must flow

through the doctors' group. What has happened with the nurse practitioner today—and I have a sister who's a very experienced nurse; in fact she studied, I think, at the University of Western Ontario, and then she studied in England. She's a qualified midwife. She came back to Canada after she got married, and they said, "You can't practise midwifery here." There's a problem with delivering and liability and insurance and the rest of it.

I would only say that scope of practice would be such things as being able to prescribe medications. I have in my riding a very, very excellent nurse practitioner; a couple of them, actually. I wanted to say that Gail Beatty is the person I'm referring to right now. I think she perhaps works for the OMA. She works in one of the consulting groups with the Ontario Medical Association or the ONA, one or the other. For instance, they were allowed to prescribe from a certain list of medications—the nurse practitioner extended class. They were also allowed to refer you directly to a specialist without going to another GP, and they were allowed to write from a certain list of prescribed medications. So that's a pretty powerful tool, and it's bumping closely into the family practitioner. A family practitioner basically can't perform surgery.

As I'm saying, I'm not trying to be in any way controversial here, but you can see that as soon as you get into the professions—we have lawyers in our caucus, and there are lawyers in other caucuses. When you start talking about paralegals taking over some of the work, especially when there are forms involved like wills and real estate documents—the lawyer signs it, of course, and all the detail has been taken care of, but some paralegals can do some of this stuff. Most of it's online. Under the definition of a professional, a self-regulatory profession, they are self-disciplining. In fact, if there are breaches made, they discipline themselves, hopefully. This is where I say that this all sounds good and we're in favour of it, but the implementation will be something to watch. It will be a work of art, I'm sure.

I also think it's important to think back to some of the comments made by Ms. Witmer; I listened very closely. She mentioned three points which I think were very important—the electronic health record. Ontario is last in Canada in terms of jurisdictions that are moving forward with electronic health records. Smart Systems for Health is what it was initially called. It's got another name now. Smart Systems was criticized by the auditor for maybe inappropriate spending of money.

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I think what's important there is that there are huge efficiencies, elimination of duplication of testing, prescription of medications etc., that the electronic health records—for instance, if someone is doctor shopping or perhaps wanting OxyContin or some other prescribed medication and going to several doctors and getting extra drugs, these things could be tracked with an electronic system.

Above and beyond being able to share patient records between health care providers—this is very important—

rather than having two MRIs, or a second opinion, or a second consult with a specialist, or even, for instance, being out of the province, I think there needs to be a greater role of having an electronic health record and a data system in support of health at a national level. If other provinces are doing it, why are we spending one more cent if it's already working in other jurisdictions? That means the doctor, the hospital, the pharmacist and all the health care providers. If I'm sick because of the swine flu or something in Newfoundland or BC, I should be able to see that record, my tests and all of the data online. That's where we should be aiming, instead of having double the cost.

The other part that I think is important is the collaborative model. I'm in full support of the collaborative model and expanding it, as well. In fact, if you look at the collaborative model, it does involve many of these health care providers from the 25 different professions that were outlined. The doctor should be the manager, of course, working in co-operation with the nurse practitioner, the pharmacist, or maybe a therapist. It could be a physiotherapist or a psychologist as well. There could be emotional issues involved in health care as well. I think that collaborative model is the right direction.

I want to, again, as has been said by almost all speakers, thank the consultation group who actually provided the information and did the work: Barbara Sullivan et al from HPRAC.

In the few remaining moments that I've been allowed to speak, I want to mention one thing that really troubles me, and that is in the letter sent to Barbara Sullivan, which I'm looking at here, from David Caplan, dated February 19, 2009. He's thanking her for submitting the latest HPRAC report, called Critical Links: Transforming and Supporting Patient Care in such a timely fashion, which precipitated this Bill 179. After the consultations that Barbara Sullivan led, he's thanking her for the work she has done. In the middle paragraph it says, "I look forward to hearing the comments of stakeholders over the coming weeks as they write to us. I also understand that HPRAC will be completing their deliberations over the issues in the eye care sector"—very important.

In the few seconds I have left, I want to put on the record the important issue here of the transferability of professions in health care; the one that I think of is the optician. Opticians can now train in Alberta and in six months they can get their degree. In Ontario, it's four years at Seneca or two years full-time. It's also taught in other colleges. It's about a two-year term, basically. So we're going to allow somebody with six months' training to come to Ontario with the same licence through the same college. I'll wait and see if that happens. That's under a program called AIT, Agreement on Internal Trade, which is an issue of limiting red tape, I guess. We need to make sure that patient safety is first.

The other one is under a program called MRA, mutual recognition arrangements. These mutual recognition arrangements are mutual across Canada: health care, the Canada Health Act, uniform service, patient services and

reasonable expectations of what kind of care you're going to get by each of these groups. I don't want to lower the standards, but I also want the standards to make sure that our students aren't being penalized under the pressure of large providers like Walmart wanting to have an eye clinic or a pharmacist who's not really a pharmacist but a pharmaceutical technician; lesser-trained people—so they can pay them lesser amounts—providing the service. Patient safety is first and paramount, and it has been said by all speakers.

I think we need to move into consultations—and they'll be lengthy consultations—and with a commitment from the minister that they're actually going to listen. With most of the bills that I have sat on in this session, there's a lot of harmony and people of goodwill trying to work together, but I have yet to see an amendment accepted, and that's disturbing. They don't have a corner on all the good ideas.

I'd certainly say that with Mr. Caplan, the minister—his mother was a pretty good minister. In fact, she implemented the independent health facilities; the labs and that were implemented by Elinor Caplan when she was the Minister of Health, under David Peterson. So we can all learn from history, and the one thing I'm forecasting here is—look to the past, the current promises by the current government in health care. We have the health tax, we have delisted service, we're spending almost 30% or 40% more, and is the system any better? They've got the Central East LHIN, the local health integrated networks, another level of bureaucracy. You can't get to the minister when you have a complaint.

In my case, I introduced a petition today with over 20,000 names, and the petition was with respect to my hospital in my community, and I don't see one single improvement, for all the glory that he says when he's responding to questions in the House. The system is no better; in fact, it's probably worse. So I'll hold my breath to make sure that Bill 179 actually does what it promises.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Lou Rinaldi): Questions and comments?

M^{me} France Gélinas: Well, I listened intently to the speech given by my colleague from the Conservative Party. It was an interesting view of Bill 179. To look at it through a monetary lens certainly sheds some new light on that bill that hadn't been put forward so far. It certainly is true that of all the program spending, health care represents 43%. For every tax dollar that is being spent on programs, 43 cents goes to health care. This is huge, as he mentioned.

His questioning as to the health premium, I would say “the hated health premium,” the lie that beat all lies as to the promise to never raise taxes and here we are with a health premium—has failed to be able to show a direct link between the new health premium. It did not lead to improved care, did not lead to decreased wait times, did not lead to better access for the one million Ontarians who still don't have access to a primary caregiver. So it was interesting to look at it in this light. Certainly the share from the federal government seems to have

increased to the tune that they will now be representing \$10 billion of the \$42-billion health care budget, which is certainly not half, not even a quarter, but it is a significant amount of money coming from the federal government toward health care.

I want to add, while we're on an economic path, that although we are expanding the scope of practice of many health practitioners, midwives, physiotherapists, nurse practitioners, dietitians, pharmacists etc., this will not mean an increase in pay. We will have an increase in responsibility, no increase in pay.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Lou Rinaldi): Questions and comments?

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: I just want to add to comments by the member from Durham and clarify something, because it was mentioned by many of the previous speakers: this comparison between family health networks and family health teams. Family health networks existed when the Conservative government was in power, and I'll tell you what a family health network is: A family health network is a group physicians who work as a network, along with a nurse-staffed after-hours telephone advisory service, to provide primary care for their patients 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

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The networks emphasize illness prevention and comprehensive care for patients. Let me tell you what this government's proposal for a family health team is. Family health teams are groups of health care professionals, such as physicians, nurse practitioners, nurses, social workers and dietitians, who work together to provide primary care for a group of patients. They provide a wide range of services, including health promotion, treatment services, chronic disease management, and prevention, rehabilitation and palliative care. They are available nights and weekends to provide health advice and care, so that their patients do not have to go to a busy hospital emergency department for non-emergency care. They also help their patients navigate their way through other parts of the health care system to receive the best possible care. As you can see, this government's proposal and strategy on the health care system is more complex and extensive compared to what was there before.

I also want to comment on some of the previous speakers. They all mentioned eHealth. As a former technology person—you cannot buy that off the shelf, plug it in and it will work. It's very complex. It takes a long time to plan and build that type of infrastructure. Our government has embarked on doing that. It will be built as we planned, and our delivery date is on target.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Lou Rinaldi): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Mike Colle: My colleague from Durham was painting a pretty bleak picture of a wonderful part of this province: Durham region, where you've got some beautiful communities like Bowmanville and Courtice. People are very proud of living there, and they're a very important part of Ontario. They're the economic and agricultural heartland of Ontario.

On health care: I heard someone mention what the federal government pays for health care. The member from Durham will remember this: When we first came into the House or just before, I think they were just paying about 15% of health care—in that range—whereas now I think the federal government only contributes about 10% of health care costs in the province of Ontario. That's a dramatic change. So the tax revenue that Ontario pays comes from Ontario. That's who support the health system in Ontario: the people, the taxpayers, the corporations in Ontario—the vast majority.

The federal Minister of Health is basically missing in action, and Tony Clement will tell you what he did as Minister of Health in Ontario compared to what he does nationally. The Ministry of Health in Ontario is a hands-on ministry. They take care of the operational, budgetary and day-to-day implementation of health care. The federal Minister of Health is now almost a low- to middle-ranking minister. The provincial ministers are the ones who undertake major health care initiatives. The provinces are where the rubber meets the road, and Ontario is obviously the largest province, where we spend over 43% of our budget on health care. That's an amazing increase, because we're being asked to do more and more all the time.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Lou Rinaldi): The member from Durham has up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. John O'Toole: I want to thank the member from Nickel Belt. In fact, I spend most of my time there. She concentrated on—the provocative word there was the lie—the Liberal lie with respect to the health tax. I'm not advocating that that's the right word, but that's the term she used and she got away with it.

The member for Scarborough—Rouge River is new here, and I forgive him; he knows not what he does, I guess. The family health networks: As I said, the very first one who signed up in Ontario was Neil McLeod, Lyn McLeod's husband, a doctor in Thunder Bay. It was a clinical practice that had in it a pharmacist, a nutritionist and other people, but they were kind of a rostered practice.

What you're telling me, and I don't know if I can get you to respond, is that these family health teams—everybody is going to get a billing code. Like, the dietitian is going to have a billing? Not likely. They're going to be working for the doctor. The doctor will allocate services. The money from the OHIP fund is not increasing. The doctors are going to become case managers, just like the US model.

I worked with Dr. Ruth Wilson, the dean of medicine from Queen's, for two and a half years, and went around the province on this collaborative family health model. You just called it a different name and threw in a few different—

Interjection.

Mr. John O'Toole: No, forget it. You don't even know what you're talking about.

Anyway, the third part is—the member from Eglinton—Lawrence, today I presented a petition; if you

want to know how good a state the system is in, of the 150 hospitals, probably 75 are in deficits. What you've got is the local integrated health networks as a fence around the minister, and there's not enough money in health care. The case here is, it's not being managed. You've got a government, and all it wants is more money, and you're providing less service. The same thing in every single thing: There's more money and less service.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Lou Rinaldi): Further debate?

Mr. Dave Levac: I appreciate the opportunity to engage in the conversation about Bill 179. First, let me start by saying to the member from Scarborough—Rouge River that, I deeply appreciate your leadership, as the parliamentary assistant, driving this bill forward and being able to be on top of the file. I appreciate very much the work that you're doing on behalf of the Ontario citizens with this bill. We thank you for that.

There are occasions in which each of the parliamentary assistants, as our system goes—and as the opposition would know because both of them have formed governments before, the parliamentary assistants do a tremendous amount of work behind the scenes, meet with many, many people, listen to the concerns that are out there and bring us some of the information so that the minister can work with those stakeholders to create a better scene for us in order for us to do that consultation and try to craft a bill.

Let me give you an example of what bills do. The reality is, and I don't think anyone can argue this—they can if they want to—it's somewhat difficult for to us understand why anyone would say there's anything that's a perfect bill. The evolution of health care started way back when, with barbers. If we want to go backwards, it's barbers—they cut the hair but then, at the same time, they bled people. That was their health care system from way back when. The evolution that has taken place in medicine around the world, not just in Ontario—but one of the biggest leaders in health care, in Ontario, has evolved, and it continues to evolve. So this type of legislation is not the be-all and end-all to the practice of what we're going to see.

In Bill 179, what we're exposed to is the health care providers in the system going through the top of their scope of practice. The “top of their scope of practice” is a term that basically says that they have been trained to do certain things but we've compartmentalized them and said, “No, you can only do this much.” What this bill is basically doing is expanding inside of their scope of practice their capacity to provide those learned processes; somebody's not going to walk in and get granted a scope of practice that they've never done before. They are going to be taking the expertise that they've learned in school and learned through practice, and this is going to be a broader section. What does that really do? Well, what it does is it allows us to work as a full team and loosens the pressure that is existing on some of those who are actually providing that service now. It allows

them to go back to their scope of practice and perform even more tasks inside of their scope.

So when you combine all of those professions that we're mentioning in this bill, what we're basically doing is not talking about the professional; we're talking about the patient receiving that scope of practice faster and in a more efficient way so that the person next up the line can do their job even better. That's the description of what we're trying to accomplish in the bill.

Let's go over what those practitioners are. In the nurse practitioner realm, they're going to apply specific forms of energy, emergency and diagnostic ultrasounds, which they weren't doing now but they're trained to do. To set a cast for a fracture or dislocated joint—they're trained to do that but right now they're not doing it. That's what the legislation does. It allows them to fulfill the full scope of their practice. Pharmacists: to prick or lance skin, to educate the patient. Right now, because of the scope of practice, they're not allowed to do that; now they can.

Physiotherapists: They tell patients their diagnosis, treat the wounds, insert an instrument, hand or finger into certain body openings for the assessment or rehabilitation of pelvic musculature—sounds rather like internal medicine here, but inside of their practice, they're trained to do that, but now they're not allowed to—order certain forms of energy, the diagnostic ultrasounds. That's another thing they've been trained to do, but inside of their scope of practice, they've yet to be able to do that. This bill will open that door for them to perform.

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Midwives—that has been spoken of in the House already—tell their patients their diagnosis, they give suppository drugs, they place the tubes in the mouth or the nose of a newborn and take blood samples from fathers and donors. Again, it's inside of their scope of practice during their training, but they're not allowed to use it. If and when the bill passes, even with amendments, we're going to see that scope of practice broaden to allow the full scope of all of our professionals to be used: dietitians, medical technologists, chiropractors and podiatrists, dental hygienists, midwives, dentists, nurse practitioners, pharmacists. Inside of the bill, the scope of practice is where we're focused so that the patient can get that service quicker and more effectively.

It will increase care across the province of Ontario. It would allow more efficient health care service, more providers working together in teams—and I want to spend a moment on working in teams. There has been a little bit of thoughtful history of the evolution of where this larger body of health professionals practices. We've gone back with, as I think the member for—Fort Frances is it?

Interjection: Nickel Belt.

Mr. Dave Levac: Nickel Belt, sorry. The member from Nickel Belt explained to us that it was the alphabet of different terminologies for all of the different providers of the eight FHTs, the family health teams. They have been known by about five or six different nicknames. Well, all of that taking place meant that everyone

was on the right path to try to get a bigger scope of practice for the patient and provide us with an opportunity to open that practice up, so that if you're taking a look at a family health team, you're going to have in there several of the positions that have been talked about in Bill 179, plus a family physician. Inside of that, the family physician may be doing something in their scope that the nurse practitioner could be doing in order to relieve some of the pressure that he or she is experiencing as a physician, and then they can take on more patients by doing exactly that.

So if you pass that around, you end up with a larger scope of practice—patients seeing that professional for their health care in a quicker, more effective and efficient way. That's the premise behind what's being talked about in Bill 179. I have not heard, thankfully, anyone say that that's the wrong direction we're going in, because that's the evolution of health care as we know it, and we continue to move.

One of the things I take issue with, though, is the implication that absolutely nothing else outside of this bill is being done to take care of some of the other concerns that are being raised. I think it's a little disingenuous to say that we're going to focus only on one bill providing health care. That's not factual. What's really the fact is there have been other layers of provisions going on while this has been designed so that, when we roll it out, it fits into the system. So that's the other thing that I think we have to be careful of: for the people to believe that only Bill 179 is being dealt with and nothing else is happening in health care. Nothing could be further from the truth.

I'm saying to you that, quite frankly, the community health centres that were announced—and some of them are up and running. The one in my riding is a few days away from a grand opening ribbon cutting. What they're doing there is providing people—there's a housing project at the very next door. Can you imagine placing the community health centres beside a community that needs affordable housing so that people who don't have family physicians have an opportunity to do a stop-in at a community health centre? That is an amazing opportunity, again providing a larger scope of practice inside that community health centre.

So now we have family health teams, community health centres, hospitals that are doing what they're doing, and we're moving some of those services out of the hospitals. By the way, I think—correct me if I'm wrong—the Conservatives had the health restructuring commission that said, "Fix the outside of the health care system, which is outside of the hospitals. Fix that first so that when you push the people out of the hospitals, they land somewhere and get taken care of properly." If I'm not mistaken, the advice they got from their own committee was, "Do that," and they went the opposite way. They didn't touch the outside, and they started pushing people outside of the hospitals to somewhere where they didn't land, and they ended up right back in the hospital again. They didn't take the advice of their own panel of

experts. Having said that, I think what we're talking about here is trying to work together with all of the health care sectors to see if we've got that right.

It has also been mentioned on the other side—I think it was the member from Hamilton East—Stoney Creek who talked about the chiropractic issue. I, too, am concerned about what's going on with chiropractic because, quite frankly, many, many people rely on chiropractic services. I have talked to chiropractors, and they have assured me that, yes, they have sent a letter to the minister about the HPRAC decisions in Bill 179. They have also been engaged with the concern by the minister that we're going to enter into a dialogue about what our next steps for chiropractors are and what our next steps are regarding the rest of the health providers that haven't been mentioned in Bill 179.

I think it's disingenuous to assume this is absolutely the end of it; it's not. It's not the end of it. It's one more step in the evolution of how we're going to provide health care. What is next? A continuation, figuring out what the next best moves are that we can make to help the patient get the service they need for the best time in the most efficient and cost-effective way. Look, I think that if all governments of all stripes were to sit back and say, "We can figure this out"—but let's all be honest about this by simply saying it cannot be done all in one bill.

Having said that, I'm going to come back to what I said at the very beginning about parliamentary assistants. My philosophy as a parliamentary assistant was to try to work with the opposition during presentation and committee work to find out if there were amendments available to us that we could use that would make the bill better, because the focus shouldn't be on whether we take an amendment from the opposition or not; it should be based on what the amendment is saying and doing for the bill. Is it making it better? I can only speak from my experience with the three bills that I've helped shepherd. We've been able to find some of the those amendments that are offered by the opposition, plant them in the bill and make it a better bill for service to our community. The citizens deserve us to be as open as possible to try to make that happen.

Now, let me add an addendum to that one. Does it mean that the NDP and the Tories will always get their amendments? No. They're not the government of the day. We're the government of the day. But does it mean that we're always going to say no? No.

Having said that, what I would suggest respectfully is that during this debate, we're hearing some of the push-back and the feedback from the opposition to provide us with some of the information that's necessary to hear what's going on at the grassroots level. I, for one, would never say that the opposition is not connected. As a matter of fact, let's just put it on the table: The opposition get access to that information because the stakeholders feel that that's the direction they want to go. They meet with them to say, "Look, we're meeting with the government. We're also going to meet with you to tell you

what our needs are, and we're going to push that through you" to us. That's the process that we're going through right now as we speak. Each of the opposition members who has stood up has been able to say—rightfully so—"I've spoken to the association of so-and-so, and I've been speaking to President So-and-so, and they've been telling me that there are some problems with the bill."

Those are the individual examples that we take back in and ask, "Have we not had those conversations?" It is fair game to say, "If we have not had those conversations with those individuals, do we want to have them?" If we have had that consultation, maybe it doesn't fit with what Bill 179 is specifically talking about. It's process to be done, and if it gets done, the amendments can happen. If the amendments don't happen, it's because it doesn't fit in with what our vision is of Bill 179.

Now, that's a little bit of a history lesson of how this process works. But sure as shooting, somebody is going to stand up and say, "Hey, do you know what? He doesn't know what he's talking about. You're not writing a perfect bill. You're wrong. We're right." I think people are out there saying, "Get over it." Let's get to work to see if we can make the best bill we possibly can to provide for the citizens. If it means that we change the profession a little bit or we use the scope of practice that has been made available for us by the colleges that regulate those professions, I say go for it.

Some people are saying, "You haven't gone far enough." It's an evolution. It's fluid. It will continue. There isn't a single bill that has been written in this place that has not had an amendment to bill so-and-so. Those types of things take place all the time. As a matter of fact, when private members' bills come out, an awful lot of people come in with an amendment to the health act or an amendment to the labour act because they are changes that are coming back through the fluid part of what I say governance is all about.

Now, when that completes itself, when that comes to an end, the idea on the committee work is to bring those people in, to the committee work, and sit down and say, "Now, here's the scope of where we want to go. Help us make this and craft it the best we can." At the end of that, we bring it back in here for third reading and final debate, which allows us one more time to provide those arguments, to say whether or not we've written the best possible bill we can. If we can't do that, it simply means that—I will guarantee this. No matter how long anybody sits in this place—and I know the two deans who are in here and have been here the longest, Mr. Bradley and Mr. Sterling, could tell you stories about where a bill started from and where it ended up, and how many times they've been changed over the years. We've found bills that haven't been touched for 90 years in this place. The one bill that I had coverage of, the bill hadn't been touched for 90 years—small little tweaks here and there. The evolution of that piece of legislation needed to take place. I think there was a part of that bill where you had to tie your horse up to the front of the building. I think there's a realism that we have to start talking about here.

1700

Now, the discussions we are having? We're headed in the right direction; that's what we've heard. Nobody said anything different. There are some people who have stood up and said, "Do you know what? You didn't go far enough on this area of practice." That's a debate. That's something that needs to be pointed out and that's something that I know the parliamentary assistant is looking forward to and is responding to, even in the two-minuters. He's trying to make sure that people are aware that we're taking those things seriously and listening to you.

The last part to this little discussion I'm having about the particular bill that we're looking at is to make sure that once we have the CHCs and the FHTs structurally ready to go, the citizens of each of those communities, where they exist, are getting the best and the fastest possible service that they can get. It doesn't mean that they're always going to have to see a doctor. That is the wonderful beauty of the thought process that went behind this creation. You don't have to see a doctor, but you need to see a health care provider who may be able to give you advice and, probably and most likely, prevent you from getting worse than you already are. As you present yourself, as you go into a CHC and, indeed, an FHT, you end up learning how to be preventive. So if we want to get together and talk about what we really should be doing in a holistic way—which is part of what Bill 179 does: talk about wellness to keep us out of the hospital in the first place. But then, when we get there, we get the best service that we can and go back into the community and get the rest of the service as follow-up. That's the synopsis I wanted to talk about, and in Bill 179 I can support it 100%.

I look forward to seeing the amendments. I look forward to hearing the debates from the committee, once we go to committee and hear the presentations from the professionals themselves. I also continue to look forward to the opposition providing us with sound, rational reasons why they want to change the bill instead of simply saying, "Well, we did it better than you. You don't know what you're talking about." You know, just listen for it; you're going to hear it: "You guys are awful, you guys are evil, you guys don't know what you're talking about." I've heard that so many times, I think the people out there are getting sick and tired of it, because what they're really saying is, "Do you know what? Get your heads out of the sand, get to work in making this a better province and better health care system for all of us to have a better chance not only us ourselves, but for our kids."

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Lou Rinaldi): Questions and comments?

Mr. Norm Miller: I'm pleased to have a couple of minutes to add some comments to the speech from the member from Brant. I hate to disappoint him, though. I won't be criticizing things too much. I know he was hoping I was going to criticize, but I would simply say that in principle, the opposition supports this bill. I think

it makes sense to expand the scope of practice where it's done with the support of the professions and where it's done in a safe way, obviously. But it provides more opportunity for our citizens to get health care as close to home as possible.

Certainly, I've given the example of my riding of Parry Sound–Muskoka, where we are fortunate to have six different nursing stations, mainly located in rural areas. I can tell you they've been providing great service, primary health care, for those mainly rural, remote communities. I can tell you from having talked to the people who make use of them, they're greatly supportive and find them extremely beneficial. I would say in the case of the model, this would be a good model for other parts of rural and northern Ontario. In the case of Parry Sound–Muskoka, there's a lot of community support: Often, there are cases where the municipalities have purchased buildings to hold the nursing station and provide it support, and it has worked very well.

In terms of Bill 179, certainly it is a bill that needs to go to committee so those various professions that are affected will have an opportunity to make constructive comments on the bill. Hopefully, then, there will be amendments as necessary to improve the bill so that we get the best possible legislation from it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Lou Rinaldi): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Paul Miller: I'd like to make a few comments on the previous speaker's, I guess, bit of a rant. The bottom line was that he mentioned the opposition, calling them "not capable" and saying that they screwed it up. Well, if my memory serves me correctly, it was that government that delisted chiropractic and physiotherapy, and that's why we're in the mess we're in now. I had two chiropractors in my office on Friday complaining about Bill 179. He talks about preventive medicine and he talks about recovery medicine. Even most doctors agree that chiropractic is not the old scenario, where they used to think they were witch doctors. These guys are very, very effective. I personally go to a chiropractor, and he has helped me a lot. So that was interesting. And the history about working with the opposition and having the opposition not criticize them all the time and work with them? Well, that's funny. I've been in several committees on several bills, and I think at last count I had supported 24 Liberal bills, and I don't recall one of ours being supported. I've sat on several committees, and not one of our amendments was accepted by all five Liberal members on four different committees. So I don't know where he gets his facts from. That's interesting, how they work together with us. I don't think so.

I'll be willing to support and work in committee and hopefully—my Bill 6 was a wonderful bill. In fact, there's some talk of it coming back. I don't know. That was a year and a half ago. It had to go through a lot of things to get back to where it is now.

So it's amazing how I've sat and been very frustrated, because when I do go to committee, everything falls on

deaf ears. All of a sudden, they're going to work with us. Well, I'm looking forward to it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Lou Rinaldi): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Mike Colle: The member from Brant knows what it's like to feel the pain of his own constituents and the people who were bludgeoned by the health care cuts a number of years ago. I think that's why at some point he expressed a little frustration. He was here during the reign of terror. He was here during the reign of Duncan Sinclair. I know the new members of the New Democrat Party don't remember Duncan Sinclair and the reign of terror. He was a hand-picked veterinary doctor—nothing against veterinary doctors—put in charge of reshaping the health care system of the largest province, Ontario. He and his henchman, Marc Rochon, decided in the dark of night, behind closed doors, which hospitals were going to close. The member from Vanier remembers. One of the hospitals on the hit list was Montfort. Twenty-eight hospitals, in the dead of night, were closed shut—no committee hearing, no debate, no questioning. Mr. Sinclair, the appointed guardian of the public health care system, came in and decided what the new health care system of Ontario would look like.

I remember in my own riding they closed Northwestern hospital. It was a new hospital with 32 acres that was closed in the middle of the night—no warning, no discussion. Then they said they were going to build a new hospital up the road, at Humber Memorial. This hospital was on eight acres. They were going to tear down all these houses to build this new, wonderful hospital. They never did that. Humber Memorial still sits there on this little site. Northwestern is still closed in my riding.

Duncan Sinclair and the reign of terror: 28 hospitals, emergency rooms, all across this province were closed, with not one word of debate in this House. Mr. Sinclair is the person you should remember.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Lou Rinaldi): Further questions or comments? If there are none, then the member for Brant has up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. Dave Levac: Let me start by saying thank you to the members from Parry Sound–Muskoka, Hamilton East–Stoney Creek and Eglinton–Lawrence.

Starting with the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka, I hope you didn't take personal offence, but it doesn't always come from every single member. It comes from some members who, for some reason, believe that the attack mode is the only way to get things done around here.

To the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek, two things: Number one, you're not on one of my com-

mittees that I rode the bill through, so it's unfortunate you had that experience. It also depends on the amendment you offer. If you want to talk about private members' bills, those are two different animals, so I hope you know the distinction between the two.

The member from Eglinton–Lawrence—I appreciate the fact that he felt my pain. They closed one of the hospitals in my riding, and 35,000 people signed a petition saying that they should keep it open and that as a matter of fact they would be willing to negotiate working together with both hospitals to see where they could go, but he said, "No way." So I have to tell you, yes, you did feel my pain, and my riding was very hurt by that.

But I would say that it's time for us to move on, and when we say "moving on," I'm getting to the point where I'm saying that if we are capable of moving in the direction we have with the economic stimulus that we're doing, we can do the same thing in health care. We've got the federal government, the municipal governments and the provincial governments all working together because we've recognized a problem and we're trying to work our way out of it. Are there glitches along the way? Yes. Let's identify them, try to fix them and move forward. But in the meantime, let's not stop and do nothing. I could quote people from the opposition on comments they've made in the media that say that this is the right direction. That's exactly what we're talking about.

My compliments go to the people behind the scenes who have been working very hard to try to make our system the best place that it can be. Quite frankly, no matter how many warts you think we've got, we're still the best health care system in the bloody world.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Lou Rinaldi): Further debate? I hear none.

Mr. Balkissoon has moved second reading of Bill 179. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Lou Rinaldi): Shall the bill be ordered for third reading?

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: I would ask that the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on Social Policy.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Lou Rinaldi): So ordered. Orders of the day.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I move adjournment of the House.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Lou Rinaldi): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

This House is adjourned until 9 o'clock tomorrow morning.

The House adjourned at 1713.

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Première session, 39^e législature

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Tuesday 26 May 2009

Mardi 26 mai 2009



Speaker
Honourable Steve Peters

Président
L'honorable Steve Peters

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 26 May 2009

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 26 mai 2009

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Good morning. Please remain standing for the Lord's Prayer, followed by the non-denominational prayer.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

MINING AMENDMENT ACT, 2009

LOI DE 2009 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES MINES

Resuming the debate adjourned on May 13, 2009, on the motion for second reading of Bill 173, An Act to amend the Mining Act / Projet de loi 173, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les mines.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Further debate?

M^{me} France Gélinas: It's my pleasure to add a few of my sentiments regarding Bill 173, the Mining Amendment Act, 2009. First of all, the Ontario Mining Act was passed in 1873. This was a long time ago, at a time when picks and shovels were used for mining. I would invite everybody to come and see Dynamic Earth in Sudbury. At Dynamic Earth, first you see a great explosion, which created the Sudbury basin, which is so rich in minerals. But then are you taken through a mine that lives through time, so you actually get to see what a mine used to look like in and around 1873, when the Mining Act was first introduced. Then you look at what a mine looked like in about 1950, and finally, as you continue on your journey, you look at what a mine looks like in 2009. So you can see the picks and shovels and the lights and the dynamite that was used back then, and then you see the leg drills and everything from the 1950s. But you also get to see the remote-controlled jumbo drills that are presently used in mining. I thought I would put a little claim in there for a very famous tourist attraction in Sudbury, but that also has to do with the Mining Act, because you can see how things have changed and how things have progressed, yet in Ontario we are stuck with a law that was drafted in 1873.

In 1873, Ontario saw the need to rapidly exploit Ontario's natural resources, because they wanted to establish control of the land and they wanted people to settle. Things have changed dramatically. In 1906, the Mining Act basically gutted the control of access to land, establishing what is called free access to land by mining com-

panies. What is now called a free entry system, mandated by the Mining Act, gave the mining industry and others free access to land in their search for minerals, regardless of who owns the surface rights. That basically means that if you're associated with the mining industry, you can go anywhere in Ontario and start looking for minerals. I can tell you that where I come from, in Nickel Belt, we see prospectors and have been seeing prospectors for many, many decades, and they do that: They will go anywhere they see fit if they think there are minerals under the ground, and sometimes on the surface also. For over 100 years, this free entry system led to clashes. It led to conflict with First Nations people, conflict with landowners and the public, and basically a lack of regard for the environment and the often really significant impact on the environment.

The Mining Act failed to recognize aboriginal and treaty rights and basically violated the established constitutional right of First Nations people to consultation and accommodation prior to all government decisions that might have an impact on their interests. It also failed to take corporate laws, policies and regulations designed to specifically protect ecological value such as the Planning Act, the Environmental Protection Act, the Ontario Water Resources Act and the Provincial Parks Act as well as the Conservation Reserves Act—so, the Mining Act basically superseded all of those. They did not have to comply with a series of acts that had been put into place to protect our environment; to protect our province, our water, our resources etc.

Amendments to the Mining Act requiring progressive rehabilitation, site closure plans and financial assurance requirements came into effect in 1991, so there has been some improvement to the act, but many of the achieved mining reforms were then dismantled in the mid-1990s. Intense conflicts over the past few years have led to an agreement, I would say by all the stakeholders, that the Mining Act needed reform.

One of the principal concerns has been the free entry system, which allows prospectors to stake claims on minerals without notifying or consulting landowners or aboriginal people, if they are on their ancestral ground.

In the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario's most recent annual report, the commissioner called for reform of the Mining Act and its associated legal mechanism. The Environmental Commissioner of Ontario noted that the Mining Act "impeded land use planning and that the existing regulatory structure for mining did not adequately assess the cumulative impact of" mining "development." It is hoped that the reform of the Mining Act will

reduce land use conflicts and “reflect modern-day values as to how Ontario public and private land should be managed.”

The government claims that Bill 173 addresses the concerns of all stakeholders. They claim it will forge new approaches to mineral exploration that will be more respectful of aboriginal communities and private landowners. Well, can all those things be done in one bill?

To really protect the environment and the rights of aboriginal people and other landholder groups, there are clear things that the act needs to do. It needs to ensure that comprehensive land use planning occurs before mining activities are allowed to proceed, so that the benefits of mining versus other land use can be taken into consideration and informed decision-making can happen. It must require environmental assessment to cover each stage of the mining process from the time prospecting starts, to exploration, to operation and to reclamation of that land. It must enshrine requirements for First Nation consent, it must provide increased rights for landowners to address issues with the free entry system, and it must require full funding for cleanup and reclamation costs.

So in my regard, how far does this act go? Well, first, many environmental groups have called for legislation to ensure that the land use planning process precedes mining activities, rather than leaving the withdrawal of crown land for land use planning at the complete discretion of the ministry. They recommend a statutory prohibition on prospecting, exploration or mining in areas subject to active land use planning initiated by governments of aboriginal peoples.

0910

The bill introduces a graduated regulatory scheme for early exploration, with exploration plans required for lower-impact activities and exploration permits required for activities with higher impact. It will be important to assess the language in this section very carefully.

Let me be clear: We don't necessarily support all of these proposals, and we don't actively oppose them either. This is a very complex piece of legislation that we will be examining very closely. We will be particularly concerned with the jobs implications of any and all changes to the act.

People know that there is a lot of mining activity happening in Sudbury. But, really, all of the mines are in Nickel Belt. The percentage of my constituents who work either directly for a mining company, in mining, or within the support industry of mining, is very, very high. In Sudbury, you do have a smelter and a mill, but all of the mines—and there are dozens of them run by big companies or junior companies—are located in Nickel Belt. So certainly, the jobs impact is something that I am interested in looking at closely.

Second, many groups have called for the implementation of environmental assessments at each stage of mining. A declaration order has exempted mining from environmental assessments in Ontario since 1981. The Ministry of Northern Development and Mines was charged with developing a comprehensive environmental

assessment system for mining processes, but there has been very little progress in this regard.

All stages of mining, from prospecting right on, have an impact on the environment. The establishment of camps for prospecting, the blazing of claim lines and the construction of new roads for initial exploration can all disturb wildlife and fragment habitats. Early exploration can strip vegetation and impact on surface and groundwater. Mining can lead to acid drainage and metal leaching, and silt and sediment can affect various bodies of water.

Currently, the government has no ability to refuse a mining claim or impose requirements for low-impact practices.

I can tell you that if you go to the northern part of Ontario, especially at this time of the year, it is not unusual to see prospectors setting up camp and starting to draw lines. They are doing exactly what I have just described, with an impact on the environment, but our government has no ability to refuse this type of work.

There are no mechanisms to allow consideration of the impacts of mining on rivers flowing through provincial parks, conservation reserves or other sensitive areas. Often, claims can be very close to those sensitive areas. Since the government cannot impose environmental protection or mitigation requirements, the public is often forced to pay for the cleanup of abandoned or poorly restored mining areas. Again, if you go through the bush in northern Ontario, you will see site after site of such poorly cleaned-up areas.

New Democrats need to hear from all stakeholders to ensure that the legislation gets the balance between protecting the environment and creating the right types of jobs and the right environment for mining to continue to grow and prosper. It is a question of balance.

It is worth noting that British Columbia and Quebec require environmental assessments of mines. The Northwest Territories and the Yukon require assessments at the exploration stage. Environmental assessments in British Columbia, Nova Scotia and Labrador have required “contribution to sustainability” tests, which assess broad environmental and social costs and benefits to present and future generations. You have to take your time and think those things through to see the kind of impact that they might have, not only on the present generation but also on future generations. In the First Nations community, it is not rare to hear them talk about the impact that it will have on six generations down the road. As a people, they take time to reflect, to really see what the costs and benefits are for themselves and also for their great-great-great-great-grandchildren.

Again, there is nothing in this act to put in place an obligatory environmental assessment of mining activity. We look forward to public hearings to hear the pros and cons of such a requirement.

Third is aboriginal consent. In 2007, the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario recommended that the Mining Act be amended to reflect government's constitutional duty to consult with First Nations. Other governments such as Australia, New Zealand and even the

Philippines have put in place legislation recognizing First Nations people's rights as higher than mining interests. Quebec requires Cree and Inuit representation on environmental assessment boards for mines. Article 32 of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, endorsed by Canada last April, requires that states obtain the free and informed consent prior to approval of any project affecting the land, territory or resources of indigenous people.

The Supreme Court of Canada has asserted that governments have a responsibility to carry out meaningful consultation with aboriginals and in some cases may require the consent of aboriginal people when making decisions that impact aboriginal rights.

Thirty groups recently wrote to the Premier in relation to the situation that had happened at Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwug, better known as KI, saying that "Canadian courts have clearly established that whenever the rights of indigenous peoples may be affected, governments have a legal duty to ensure that there must always be meaningful consultation to identify and accommodate indigenous concerns. Depending on the potential impacts, courts have found that this legal duty may include other more stringent measures 'to avoid irreparable harm,' including in some cases agreeing to proceed only with the consent of the affected peoples."

Despite this very clear direction from the Canadian courts, the Ontario government allowed Platinex Inc., a Toronto-based mineral exploration company, to stake claims and begin exploratory drilling on KI's traditional land without any consultation. We all know what ensued. Six members of Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwug, KI First Nation in northern Ontario were sentenced on contempt charges for their peaceful opposition to drilling for platinum on their traditional lands.

In a similar case, the Ardoch Algonquin and Shabot Obaadiwan First Nations say that trees were cut and blasting begun without them being notified that the province had given Frontenac Ventures permission to carry out uranium exploration on Algonquin land. Ardoch Algonquins were sentenced in court for opposing uranium exploration in a part of eastern Ontario which they have never surrendered and which is currently part of the Algonquin land claim negotiation.

All these charges relate to the non-violent actions of reasonable and concerned people opposed to exploration and mining activity that the provincial government should not have permitted in the first place. Those were avoidable. A little bit of prevention would have helped a lot of people.

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The Ontario Mining Act allows exploration activities, including aerial surveying, felling trees, blasting and drilling trenches, and the construction of temporary roads and shelters, without any public consultation and environmental assessment. Such provisions are incompatible with other responsibilities of the province.

The bill is a thick read and not one that should be taken lightly, but I will summarize my five main concerns.

The amendments do not meet constitutional requirements for crown consultation and accommodation with First Nations, and attempt to relegate this important responsibility to private interests.

Second, the amendments leave the creation of the third party interest on the land—at the prospecting and early exploration stage—with no permit required, no consultation and no environmental review, although damage may happen at that stage.

The demand for a uranium exploration and uranium mining moratorium in Ontario is ignored, despite enormous public concern.

The environment is completely missing from the document. Actually, if you try a word search of the document, it will indicate that there is only one place where the word "environment" is mentioned. The need for environmental assessment before the issuance of claims, mining leases or other mining permits is ignored, and the declaration order which makes this possible is left untouched.

Fifth, no changes are proposed to the egregious situation which allows companies like Vale Inco and Xstrata Nickel, right in my riding, to self-assure for reclamation instead of posting a realizable financial assurance, despite recommendations from the Auditor General to the contrary so that we could better protect ourselves for reclamation of the land once mining activity has ceased.

A big piece of legislation; still lots of debate needed.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: I want to thank the member from Nickel Belt for her thoughtful comments. She showed very well that she appreciates the complexity of this legislation and how important it is that we indeed get it right, and particularly how important it is that we strike the balance that's needed.

I wish I had more time to respond, because there are a number of issues that the member raised, and we'll have an opportunity to discuss these further as we move along the process, even beyond second reading, into what we hope to see: public consultation.

The fact is that the broad principles of this legislation have been strongly supported by all the organization stakeholders that the member mentioned. In terms of our relationship with our aboriginal partners, there are groundbreaking parts of this legislation in terms of the aspects of the bill that recognize aboriginal and treaty rights of legislation that require consultation and notification in almost all sections of the mining sequence. We did receive significant support from many First Nation leaders and the Métis Nation of Ontario as well, as the member would know. From the environmental perspective, we did receive significant support, and I would argue the toss in terms of what is in there.

What becomes clear, when I listen to the opposition respond to the legislation, is that I think that in their remarks they also recognize the challenge. When you break it down, as did the member for Nickel Belt, who obviously is very concerned with employment, you want

to make sure we have a continued positive investment climate. On the other hand, there is a need to move forward to modernize the act. I'm not sure of the position that you take in light of all the need to find that balance. I trust that you recognize that we believe strongly that this legislation has gone a long way, and very significantly, toward finding the balance that's needed to modernize the Mining Act.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Norm Miller: I'm pleased to add some comments to the speech from the member from Nickel Belt on Bill 173, the Mining Amendment Act.

She started out by doing a tourism promo for the Big Nickel and Sudbury. I'll just let her know that on a few March breaks, when my family was younger, I did take advantage of going to Science North and the Big Nickel, so I have seen first-hand, with a young family, the many attractions of the Sudbury area and I certainly recommend them to other families.

To do with the new Mining Act, one of the aspects talked about was the community-based planning for the far north. I think it's important to recognize that the actual footprint of a developed mine is pretty tiny. If you look at the Attawapiskat new diamond mine west of James Bay, the footprint is, I believe, about the size of Queen's Park. So I think it's important, when we are looking at the far north, to not limit prospecting in the far north but perhaps to look at limiting where the actual mine could be, because you don't know where you're going to find the next mine. If you are trying to encourage mining in the province, which is very important as an employer for aboriginal communities and very important to the economy of the province, I think we have to be careful that we don't limit where the actual prospecting can happen. I think it's important to lighten the footprint and through aspects of this bill; map staking will probably have that effect. With active mining going on, the actual amount of land that would be used for mines, if we're very successful, is tiny. So I think we should be encouraging looking for new mines. They are so important for the economy of this province and for the aboriginal communities in this province.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Howard Hampton: I listened intently to my colleague from Nickel Belt's speech. Mining is something that she of course is very familiar with, given that Nickel Belt is in fact the site of the largest and most productive nickel mines yet, so far, in the world. I think she highlights some of the challenges this government has failed to deal with in this bill. No one, leastwise the member for Nickel Belt, is going to underestimate the issues that must be addressed here.

The fact of the matter is that north of the 51st parallel, 99.99% of the people who live there are First Nations. You might find the odd non-native pilot flying around, you might find the odd non-native teacher or non-native nurse working north of the 51st parallel, but 99.99% of

the people who live there, and live there permanently, are First Nations. That is the primary issue, in my view, that has to be addressed. First Nations have some particular views about the environment, they have some particular views about environmental decision-making, and First Nations rightly have some views about things like informed consent. Imagine if somebody said that they wanted to develop a mining property in Toronto. I can tell you that every neighbourhood in Toronto would want information and they would want the capacity to consent or deny consent. This is one of the things we have to get our head around: that the people who actually live north of the 51st parallel are going to demand, and reasonably demand, that they have the power of consent or non-consent.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Michael A. Brown: I appreciated the comments from the member for Nickel Belt. I think she raised through her presentation a large number of the issues that this bill attempts to reconcile. This bill of course is about balance. It is about balancing the views of people in the First Nations communities with the certainty that the mining industry wishes to have in terms of the process that they need to go through to develop a new mine. In particular, it needs to address many of the issues that surround prospecting in terms of finding new mines. I represent a large northern constituency that actually dwarfs Nickel Belt in terms of size. I recognize that some of the largest gold mines, and most productive gold mines, were found at the Hemlo gold fields right on the edge of my riding and the minister's riding. They were found right beside the TransCanada Highway, Highway 17. You could throw a stone and find them from there. So what it speaks to is, you never know where you're going to find a mine.

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I have people I am acquainted with who are actively exploring for diamonds in the Wawa area, and it looks to me like we're going to have some huge successes in diamonds in the Wawa region.

What we need to do is find a balance. There are issues, and I'm pleased the member has raised those issues. But for every one she raised, there are two or three stakeholders on the other side who need to have their views heard also. So, as we go through this process, through the committee stage, I'm hopeful that we can find a reasonable solution to a very complex problem. I'm sure that anybody who represents the nickel mining folks, whether they be employees or employers in Nickel Belt, will know all about how complicated this really is.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I'll return now to the member for Nickel Belt, who has two minutes to respond.

M^{me} France G  linas: First of all, I appreciated the comments from the Minister of Northern Development and Mines. Yes, we do need a positive investment climate. It is no surprise to anybody that although Sudbury has diversified, nickel mining and mining in general is

still the bread and butter of hundreds and thousands of families, and the same for Nickel Belt, which shares a land mass with Sudbury.

To the member for Parry Sound–Muskoka, I'm really happy that he took the opportunity to go underground and visit the Big Nickel mine, which is now part of Dynamic Earth. Again, I encourage everybody who doesn't know what to do with their summer holidays to come to Sudbury and take in Dynamic Earth. You'll get to go underground, put on the safety goggles and hard hat and everything else. It will be an experience you will never forget, and it's lots of fun for the whole family.

I think my colleague from Kenora–Rainy River sums it up correctly, that the challenges ahead of us cannot be underestimated. To find the right balance is something important, but we have to realize that most of the mining exploration will take place north of the 51st parallel, which will mean in First Nations territories. Although some First Nations have spoken in favour, many are not satisfied with what is in the bill and want to see changes, mainly the First Nations that are north of the 51st parallel and will be impacted.

Lastly, I was happy to hear my colleague from Algoma–Manitoulin say, "We hope to find a reasonable solution to a complex problem," saying that he hopes to leave the door open, that maybe we're not quite there yet, but with working together and listening to one another, we'll get there.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Toby Barrett: When we are addressing this proposed mining legislation, Bill 173, we should be reminded in this House that we have to be mindful of our actions and their impact. We're looking at changes to a piece of legislation originally written 136 years ago, and what we're doing today may well have ramifications 136 years into the future.

We all know the importance of mining to the province of Ontario: a \$9.6-billion annual business and major contributor to this country's trade surplus; a very high productivity business; something like \$600 million in corporate tax revenues, and I'm sure with the recession that is on a downward spiral; and, of course, a very significant payroll. Up until recently, there were something like 100,000 direct and indirect jobs within this industry, many of those positions filled by native Canadians.

These are some of the reasons that, when we were in government, we cut the mining tax rate in half. Regrettably, more recently, this present McGuinty government, for example, tripled taxes on De Beers, the operation just west of Attawapiskat. It's interesting. We know the industry is the largest private sector employer of aboriginal people in Ontario, a vital generator of regional development—something very important in northern Ontario. This is a fact that bears careful consideration as we look to address mining law in Ontario.

Having said that, I understand there's much at stake— if I can use that pun—when it comes to development of new mining legislation, and I think I heard that this

morning. We have to get this right. I'm not sure that this bill would actually do that. I know our critic made some allusions to that concern, in particular, when we get into the discussions with respect to revenue sharing—I travelled with that committee a number of years ago—when we get into discussions with respect to duty to consult with area native people.

I think all of us here received an e-mail from a concerned prospector with a series of issues which actually help frame some discussion with respect to the importance of getting this right, and I quote this communication:

"The unveiling of this act has created too much uncertainty in the exploration industry in northern Ontario, and junior mining companies have already either packed up or put the brakes on their exploration programs. Some of the act is all right but the majority is bad for the industry and, in turn, is bad for the province. As I read it"—he goes on to say—"I start understanding how little northern Ontario is valued within the province and how our northern politicians have turned into 'yes-men' to gain votes for the leaders in the south."

The prospector further states: "Most of the proposed changes were present in previous mining acts and were originally changed because too much high-potential land was being tied up and not being explored. Previous ministers recognized this and repealed and changed portions of the act to promote the economic growth of Ontario. This act will reverse all the gains made in the past 20 years and reinstate errors made in past mining acts." And this prospector goes on to say, "Have you actually gone through the reasons some of the changes were originally made, before you change them back?"

Now, we've had media reports regarding this bill. They paint a rosy picture. This concerned prospector has some opinions on what the impact will be, and I'll just quote in part: "(1) the act will destroy the prospector because we cannot afford to compete with the major mining companies ... this act will destroy exploration because there's too much uncertainty ... it will increase the cost of raw materials in the province, thus increasing the cost of production," and it goes on and on.

In addition to these kinds of comments from this prospector, I have further concerns surrounding the fact that while some aspect of provincial rules for mining and prospecting are more fully developed and understood, other attempts at clarification leave some unanswered questions. The water is a little muddy, from my perspective anyway.

By the same token, there has been very little communication from this government as far as plans for the boreal forest. Again, I would like to find out what is going on there as far as projections, plans, with respect to revenue sharing and consulting. Most of these questions surround this particular legislation and its role in addressing aboriginal concerns, including duty to consult and revenue sharing. Later on, I would further like to highlight some of the questions regarding this legislation's potential role in creating mining and prospecting

regulation and where this leaves some of the smaller players.

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As we've heard, the legislation deals with recognizing aboriginal and treaty rights and envisions a dispute resolution process for mining-related issues. For example, aboriginal cultural sites can be removed from claim-staking. Communities will be notified immediately after a claim is staked. Here's this expression "mineral explorationists." I'm not sure where that term came from. I think that's a code word for a prospector. Again, if you think of the history of mining, I don't know what they would call the burro, the donkey that a prospector traditionally would carry along with him in so much of North America. That would be probably an associate mineral explorationist. Again, I'm not sure why we're going down this road.

The mineral explorationists will be required to notify First Nations of their activities on traditional lands. I am not sure what is meant by "traditional lands" as well, and we'd have to go back to the original treaties to see if they even talk about traditional lands. There's also a seeming clarification of the consulting process between mining companies and First Nations as well.

Before I get too far ahead on analyzing the revenue sharing and the consultation, I want to go back to a theme that I've raised earlier in this debate. I do draw members' attention to the fact that while we can modernize legislation, we have to respect the knowledge and the wisdom of those who have gone before. I think specifically of miners, prospectors and others involved in the very rich history of mining right across North America. We can learn from the past.

I made mention that much of my family's history in gold mining has been documented, and this goes back to 1849, in this case not in Ontario but up and down the Merced River, the Yosemite area now—more recently, the Yosemite park area. This is of interest, to me anyway, when I look at some of the documents within our family. It would be in 1849 that my great-great-uncles left Port Dover by boat to Panama. There was no canal then; they had to buy horses. You'd catch another boat to San Francisco. Oftentimes those boats were sunk in San Francisco harbour. Then they head up into the Sierras. Last summer I was in one of the tunnels that was built by my great-great-uncle in 1850. I brought back some quartzite rock. I'm not allowed to show it here, but I have some of this rock piled by my fireplace.

It's interesting for me, anyway. Joseph Barrett—these are some of my uncles—Henry Barrett and Thomas Barrett all were involved in gold mining. This was well before this legislation was created, although there was Mariposa county legislation at that time that guided their actions. I look at some of the claims. On July 5, 1862, Joseph filed and recorded a claim. This was at the head of French Gulch. This runs into the Merced River. There's another claim: On July 6, 1862, Joseph filed a claim on French Gulch where it empties into Temperance Creek. February 6, 1863: All three of my uncles—

Joseph, Henry and Thomas Hubert Barrett—filed claims on a quartz vein or lode on the south side of Cotton Creek and indicated that they worked the same in accordance with the mining laws of Mariposa county. On April 5, 1863, Joseph Barrett filed claims for a copper, gold and silver lode at Chimmisall, the west side of the Grapevine Gulch. The three brothers filed claim number 227 in Mariposa county in the state of California. It goes on and on, most of this up and down the Merced River. We have these claims. They're in very clear handwriting from the county official. These have been passed down through the family.

Of course, at that time, and I rely partly on oral family history, we had to deal with the Yosemite Indians. The Yosemite were originally driven out of what is now Yosemite park by the federal government. My family had very good relationships with the people there. We had leases, for example, and maintained those leases over the years for cattle. We ran cattle in what is now Yosemite park.

I do reflect that the concept of revenue sharing, back in those days, probably didn't exist unless you worked those veins and worked those lodes. As far as taking a share, I know from family history that shares were taken at gunpoint.

So we can learn from the past. I'm not saying that some of what went on in the Sierras of California went on in northern Ontario, but much of that is actually—we keep within the family, by the way. My point is, we can learn from the past. We talk about modernization, and we have to be cognizant of what we do with this legislation, what kind of impact that's going to have 100 years or 200 years down the road.

Back to Ontario: In the legislation there are, as we know, a series of proposed changes that the government hopes will address aboriginal consultation and revenue sharing. For instance, the purpose clause of the Mining Act is "amended to include the statement that mining activities are encouraged in a manner consistent with the recognition and affirmation of existing aboriginal and treaty rights." Some of those treaties go back to 1850 in northern Ontario.

From today's Ontario bill, I understand that aboriginal consultation would be required for exploration plans and permits for early exploration activity, proportionate to the potential impact of the proposed activities. Later-stage activities of advanced exploration and mine development already require aboriginal consultation, through closure plan requirements in the regulations. Just in the interests of time, I'll skip over some of that material.

I would like to raise the issue of some of the treaties that provide direction on land, aboriginal and related issues. We know of the Robinson-Superior Treaty of 1850, the Robinson-Huron Treaty of 1850, as well as the related treaties: Treaty 9 and Treaty 5. I've received some information on these treaties. It seems that aboriginals gave up their right and title to the land outside of the reserves to the crown but were allowed the right "to pursue their usual vocations of hunting, trapping and

fishing throughout the tract surrendered ... saving and excepting such tracts as may be required or taken up from time to time for settlement, mining, lumbering, trading or other purposes.”

James Bay Treaty 9, I'll just quote in part: “Whereas, the said commissioners have proceeded to negotiate a treaty with the Ojibwa, Cree and other Indians, inhabiting the district hereinafter defined and described, and the same has been agreed upon, and concluded by the respective bands at the dates mentioned hereunder, the said Indians do hereby cede, release, surrender and yield up to the government of the Dominion of Canada, for His Majesty the King and his successors forever, all their rights, titles and privileges whatsoever, to the lands included....” Then it goes on to say, “They shall have the right to pursue their usual vocations of hunting, trapping and fishing ... excepting such tracts as may be required or taken up from time to time for settlement, mining, lumbering, trading or other purposes.”

Both Treaty 9 and 5 relate in part to the NAN organization.

Treaty 5: “The Saulteaux and Swampy Cree tribes of Indians and all other the Indians inhabiting the district hereinafter described and defined, do hereby cede, release, surrender and yield up to the government of the Dominion of Canada”—and it goes on and on in pretty well the same context as with the other treaty.

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I don't know whether this legislation is assuming there were mistakes made in these treaties or the wording of the treaties is wrong. If it's being argued these treaties don't mean what they say, why are these treaties being maintained? I'm not sure to what extent this provincial government is interpreting these treaties and what role the federal government is playing as far as this particular legislation or any work that's being done in the boreal forest. Again, we have to be cognizant of Supreme Court rulings as well with respect to upholding these treaties. I could go on and on. I have information on the Robinson-Huron treaty of 1850, pretty well following the same line.

There's some information from the Prospectors and Developers Association of Canada. In their submission, “Despite a growing series of court cases, particularly those decided by the Supreme Court of Canada, extensive written commentaries and the emergence of a burgeoning ‘consultation industry’, we believe that widespread misunderstanding and confusion still persist in relation to

“(a) the legal basis for the duty to consult and to accommodate;

“(b) how that duty should be discharged; and

“(c) the respective roles of government, proponents and aboriginal communities and organizations in completing that process.

“In its 2004 decision in *Haida*, the Supreme Court of Canada explicitly determined that the duty to consult and, if appropriate, to accommodate is exclusively a duty of the crown. Acknowledging the need to ensure an orderly process and guard against unstructured discretion, the court also said that governments could establish policies or set up regulatory schemes to guide the civil service in

fulfilling that duty. The court went on to say that while the ultimate legal responsibility for consultation and accommodation rests with the crown, governments are entitled to delegate procedural aspects of consultation to industrial proponents in relation to a particular development.”

Again, I find this very complex. I haven't heard much of this discussed in the context of this particular piece of legislation. Obviously, I hope all of this is being taken into consideration.

As I wrap up, I think it's important to continue that discussion on revenue sharing. I know MPP Bisson has done an awful lot of work on this. There is a Canadian Press article indicating, “The legislation stops short of giving aboriginal communities a share of mining revenues, but the province set aside \$30 million last week” to indicate that they're serious.

There's no question, as we move forward, that the discussion on revenue sharing will dominate much of this discussion and I'm sure it will come up yet again during committee hearings.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Howard Hampton: I enjoyed listening to the comments of my colleague from the Conservative Party. I want to use this opportunity, though, to take a different perspective on some of the things he discussed, in particular the interpretation of treaties.

In so-called modern, urban Ontario society we certainly have our interpretation of the treaties. Words like “surrender” are part of that interpretation, that the First Nations “surrendered” the land and, in return, First Nations were granted certain limited reserves. That's our interpretation. The interpretation of First Nations is far different. The interpretation of First Nations is that they did not surrender the land; they agreed to share it with us, the Europeans who arrived late on the scene. They agreed to share the land and share the resources. But the word “surrender” appears nowhere in the interpretation of First Nations.

I think that's one of the things this bill has to wrestle with, and I would say to the minister, if the government tries to avoid wrestling with those different interpretations, then I think trouble lies ahead. My sense of the First Nations north of the 51st parallel is that they are going to insist upon a sharing of the resources, a sharing of the decision-making and a just sharing of the revenues. It is the degree to which this bill either succeeds or fails in wrestling with those things which will determine its success or failure.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: Thank you to the member for Haldimand-Norfolk for your comments, and I appreciate it's the second time you've had an opportunity to speak, last time in a two-minuter, I believe, related to your own family's past. I do appreciate the comments.

May I say I want to respond a little bit to the comments from the member for Kenora-Rainy River, if I'm allowed to do so.

Certainly, our government has made a very clear commitment to the revenue-benefit-sharing process in terms of the revenues from mining. In fact, prior to the introduction of our legislation on April 30, the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs announced that \$30 million, considered a down payment in terms of that process, was committed and was well-received by the First Nation leadership across the province. I think it's important to note that indeed we are committed to that process, and it is an important part not so much of our legislation, because this is a separately managed part of the relationship that we have with our aboriginal partners—that's important for all of us to recognize.

Also, may I say in terms of the comments you made related to the concerns expressed by the prospector you quoted, there is no question that what we were asked for very much as well was for some real clarity in terms of how we would be moving forward with a modernized act, and I'm pleased to say that we kept all stakeholders very involved in the process. Certainly, in terms of our aboriginal partners, there was a special process in place to make sure that they worked alongside us as we moved towards the legislation. In terms of the prospectors association, that was the case as well, and we have received support from the Ontario Prospectors Association as a result of our efforts to work closely.

We recognize just how incredibly important, as I said earlier and you said as well, it is to get this right and that's why we've worked so hard with all our stakeholders to try and move forward, to bring forward a very positive, modernized Mining Act.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: I was pleased to listen to the member for Haldimand-Norfolk, and I know his passion for this topic. The content clearly describes his concerns in trying to find the stable environment that this industry requires to make those kinds of investments.

But I guess this is where the minister needs to make sure that we're being clear that the First Nations—that there need to be some issues resolved here. These issues of entitlement are complex. We understand that. We also realize that there's been a fund set aside to sort of resolve some of these things upfront. But ultimately, it's sharing in the royalties of the revenue. That is ultimately what they want; they want that constitutionally enshrined. I guess, at the end of the day, the other is the issue of property rights. In the broader sense, it's my understanding those are the issues that we have the greatest amount of trouble with: making sure of the property rights of the individual who doesn't want someone to be on their property doing certain things—exploration—or does want them, and it appears there are changes in that respect as well. I did have some comments myself, but I guess this morning, because of the way the clock works and these new, wonderful standing orders—it precipitates that you never know if you're going to get to speak on the issue or not.

I also want to reflect on the comments that the Ontario Real Estate Association has brought to the minister's

attention under Bill 173, so that the landowners in southern Ontario, where there are significant rights of the owner and the mining rights belong to the crown—these issues as well are part of what we want to make sure are clear in any development of this new and important piece of legislation.

I always admire the member from Haldimand-Norfolk, his passion to get it right and to stand up for justice.

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The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

M^{me} France Gélinas: I too was interested in the comments made by the member for Haldimand-Norfolk, but also in the view he took of Bill 173, the Mining Amendment Act, focusing mainly on revenue sharing.

Mining is a significant source of revenue, and certainly revenue sharing is something that needs to be addressed in the bill and something that I had brought forward, as I understand that what I consider to be a positive investment climate will lead to more jobs and to sustainable mining in Ontario. I was interested in his view of it, where I think we all agree that we need to bring certainty to all parties in order for mining to continue to flourish in a respectful way.

But here, again, the interpretation of treaty rights with the First Nations, especially north of the 51st parallel, has to be at the basis and the core of it. To try to balance the treaty rights versus the mining rights is a first step, and this can only happen through open consultation. As I said before, this responsibility cannot be relegated to a private interest, which is something that is lacking in the bill and that we would like to see.

So it's an interesting view of Bill 173, focused on revenue sharing, and it has certainly shone a light on a number of areas in the bill that still need clarification to make sure that we get it right. Thanks for your comments.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Haldimand-Norfolk has two minutes to reply.

Mr. Toby Barrett: I do thank members for comments on what is a very complex and, I think we all find, a very interesting piece of legislation. I know there have been several members who have discussed the subsequent interpretation of these original treaties.

I didn't get a chance to reference the Robinson-Huron treaty of 1850. I'll just quote it. It seems fairly clear to me. What was said: "They the said chiefs and principal men, on behalf of their respective tribes or bands, do hereby fully, freely and voluntarily surrender, cede, grant and convey unto Her Majesty, her heirs and successors for ever, all their right, title, and interest to, and in the whole of, the territory above described, save and except the reservations set forth in the schedule...."

I don't think that treaty has been changed or rewritten. I don't think this legislation is going to attempt to do that.

Minister Gravelle does address the issue of revenue sharing, as does the Minister of Natural Resources and the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs. I know Minister

Duguid made mention, I think in the media: "There's no question about whether we're going to move forward with revenue benefits sharing. The question is, what's it going to look like?"

That's a very valuable question to raise, and what will that look like? I mentioned the committee hearings a few years ago and deliberations on that very same question. We do have to, through this legislation, provide some clarity to all concerned with respect to that issue.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate? The member for Kenora-Rainy River.

Mr. Howard Hampton: I have about 12 minutes, so I want to cover a lot of ground.

First of all, let's be really clear what this legislation is about. No one is clamouring at the municipal boundary of Toronto to start prospecting for a mining operation in and around the greater Toronto area. Similarly, to my knowledge, no one is pounding at the gates of Windsor, Hamilton, London, Kingston or Ottawa. No one is out there in rural agricultural Ontario, to my knowledge, actively prospecting for the next gold mine. You might find isolated spots, localities in southern Ontario where someone is interested in doing some prospecting. But the reality is, this bill is all about what happens in northern Ontario in general and what happens north of the 51st parallel in particular.

Let's be clear: The hottest mining area in the world is no longer the Congo River basin or the Amazon River basin or some island in the central Pacific. The hottest mining area in the world is that part of Ontario which essentially lies north of Sioux Lookout, north of Kapuskasing, all the way up to the shores of Hudson Bay and James Bay. You have mining corporations from all over the world tripping over each other trying to get access. That's what this is about. This is really about what lies north of the 51st parallel, and to a certain extent what lies north of Lake of the Woods, north of Rainy Lake, north of Lake Superior and to a certain extent north of Kirkland Lake in Timmins—the hottest mining area in the world.

The big issue is this: There is hardly anyone living there but First Nations, and many of the mining operations that are being conducted, for example Muskeg White or Attawapiskat, involve non-aboriginal people flying in on an airplane, maybe working there for two weeks, possibly three weeks in some cases, and then flying back out. There are no permanent non-aboriginal settlements of any size to speak of. We're really talking here about a part of Ontario that is overwhelmingly populated by First Nations people, and it's been that way since before any of us arrived in Canada—long before any of us arrived in Canada. So this is really about the rights and the rules and who benefits. Anything else that appears in the bill is really sort of public relations massaging. That's the issue.

Now, the First Nations who live north of the 51st parallel are not philosophically opposed to mining. They are not. Many believe that mining represents the last opportunity, or certainly the best opportunity, for many of these First Nations to actually rise above serious levels

of unemployment, and the opportunity to address a number of very serious social and community issues. But those First Nations communities want to be assured that the rules, in fact, are going to be fair, and most of all, they want to be sure that they're going to be primarily involved in the decision-making. I don't think that's such an unreasonable thing.

To put it bluntly, they want to be assured that some bureaucrat sitting in an office in Toronto isn't going to draw circles on the map and say, "Well, here it is folks. This is the way it is." Let me tell you, this fear is very realistic. Sit down and look at some of the so-called parks that were established north of the 51st parallel in the 1970s and 1980s and what you'll find is that that's exactly how they were established. No one went to talk to the First Nations of Wapekeka before establishing a provincial park on their very doorstep. No one said to the First Nation of KI or Wapekeka: "What are your views? What do you think? What do you believe we should do?" No. A couple of downtown Toronto environmentalists and a couple of provincial bureaucrats sat down in an office and drew a circle on the map and said, "Here it is."
1010

Imagine if someone did that to the people of Toronto, if someone sitting in Washington or in London, England, said, "I think it's a good idea that we do thus and so in downtown Toronto, and thus and so in Mississauga," and issued the appropriate documentation so that it happens. I can just imagine what people in Toronto and Mississauga would say. You would probably have the next thing to riots in the streets. People would say, "This is colonialism," and it is. It would be colonialism. And it will be a repeat of colonialism if the end effect of this bill is that someone sitting in an office in Toronto says, "It shall be thus and so." What First Nations at KI believe, or what First Nations in Neskantaga or Fort Severn believe—"We'll consult about that, but the decision has been made."

First Nations really want five things. First of all, they want consultation and accommodation.

While this bill was being drafted, I had the opportunity during January and February to meet with a number of First Nation chiefs and councils. I went to Pikangikum; North Spirit Lake; Poplar Hill; Deer Lake; Keewaywin; Sandy Lake; Muskrat Dam; Round Lake; Sachigo Lake; Bearskin Lake; Big Trout Lake, otherwise known as Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwug; Fort Severn; Angling Lake; Cat Lake; Lansdowne House; Summer Beaver; Wunnumin Lake; Kingfisher Lake; North Spirit Lake; and Webequie—20 First Nations. I asked the chiefs and councils and elders the same question: "Has anyone from the provincial government—the Ministry of Natural Resources, Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs, Ministry of Northern Development and Mines, Ministry of the Environment—come to your community, sat down with chief and council, sat down with the community in general and raised these issues and talked about proposed amendments and the issues?" Do you know what the answer was in every case? The answer was, "No; no one

has come here to consult with us. No one has come here to talk to us. No one has come here to discuss with us any of these issues."

The most that happened is there were a couple of information meetings in Thunder Bay and a couple of information meetings in Sioux Lookout, and I think there was one information meeting in Red Lake. That's what they were. They weren't consultation, give-and-take, "What do you think? What do you believe? How do we address this issue?" They were essentially information meetings.

So if the minister is wondering why no one from Nishnawbe Aski Nation or Treaty 3 or the Robinson Superior Treaty organization stood up and said, "Oh, we think this is good legislation, and we approve of it," it's because, from right off the bat, First Nations felt that the first key ingredient—consultation and accommodation—didn't happen.

In fact, let me quote Sol Atlookan from the Matawa First Nations. The minister would know the Matawa First Nations because some of the Matawa First Nations are in his riding. Matawa was very specific. Chief Sol Atlookan, spokesman for Matawa First Nation, expressed deep concern that the government has not taken First Nations' input seriously, specifically regarding the fundamental issues of duty to consult and get advance consent. "Matawa First Nation ... members respectfully requested that consultation from industry should take place in the community and at the community level and that consent from the community has to be the major priority before any claim-staking takes place." However, they feel that their voices "have been shockingly ignored" and that they have wasted all their "time and resources with this process." So, right off the bat, First Nations are saying, "Hey, folks, there are some serious problems here."

Let me address the issue of prior informed consent. Grand Chief Stan Beardy of Nishnawbe Aski Nation was very clear on this. He said, "The government of Ontario did not allow enough time to conduct meaningful consultation with NAN First Nations in the development of this legislation.... We will continue to insist upon a mechanism through which NAN First Nations will be consulted and will have meaningful input into the decision-making process." Then he goes on to point out, again, rightfully so, that if this legislation is going to mean anything, it will have to enshrine the principles of prior informed consent before many First Nations in NAN territory will allow mining activity to take place, and that is not in this bill.

The third issue is environmental protection and land use planning, and I want to emphasize something again here. A couple of downtown Toronto environmentalists, a couple of people from the Ministry of the Environment and a couple of people from the Ministry of Natural Resources sitting in an office in downtown Toronto, saying, "This is how environmental protection will happen and this is how land use planning will happen": That is not going to pass the test. That, again, is simply colonialism repackaged in a new, flashy envelope, but it's not

going to pass muster with First Nations. First Nations insist, rightfully so, that if something is going to happen in the place where they live and only they live, they should have a deciding role in environmental protection and land use planning.

Finally, let me just deal with the issue of revenue sharing—and I know the Speaker wants to wrap up. We're not talking here about a few million dollars. In Red Lake alone, the gold mining in Red Lake, probably in excess of \$10 billion has been taken out of the ground. First Nations say, "Where did we benefit from this?" I could take members on a tour of Rosedale and Forest Hill and show you many mansions of people who benefited from that, but the First Nations who live in that area still continue to live in poverty. First Nations are not talking about \$5 million here or \$10 million there. They recognize that, particularly in the Ring of Fire, we're probably talking about tens upon tens upon tens of billions of dollars of wealth, and real revenue sharing will mean that First Nations will get a just share of that.

Now, Speaker, you're going to shut me down just as I was in full flight. But I would say to the government there are still a lot of problems—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Actually, I'm reluctant to cut off the member for Kenora—Rainy River. However, standing order 9(a) compels the Speaker to wrap up at 10:15, and this House stands in recess until 10:30.

*Second reading debate deemed adjourned.
The House recessed from 1017 to 1030.*

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: I'd like to introduce Mr. Adrian Mercer, who is sitting in the members' gallery this morning. Adrian is from Toronto and is currently helping in my office as a summer student. Adrian will soon be headed into his fourth year majoring in the political science program at the University of Toronto, while also pursuing a minor in English. It's a pleasure to have him on board, and I would ask that my colleagues join me in welcoming Adrian.

Mr. Bruce Crozier: I'm pleased to welcome representatives from the Insurance Brokers Association of Ontario to Queen's Park today. As you may know, prior to becoming an MPP, I was a member of the IBAO as a registered insurance broker. Today, the IBO serves the interests of more than 10,000 independent insurance brokers across Ontario. I want to remind you that they will be hosting us at a reception in the legislative dining room from 5 to 8 this evening. Please join me in welcoming members of the Insurance Brokers Association of Ontario to Queen's Park today.

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: I am pleased to introduce to you Chelsey Meehan. Chelsey is a student at Robert Bateman High School in Burlington. Chelsey was one of the students who made delegation to Bill 126 when we had hearings, and she will be working in my constituency office this summer. Welcome, Chelsey.

Mr. Jeff Leal: It's really an honour for me today to introduce the president of the Insurance Brokers Association of Ontario, Mr. Peter Blodgett from Peterborough. Mr. Blodgett owns Darling Insurance of Peterborough, one of the great insurance companies in my hometown. They have a very interesting theme and philosophy for their business: "Proud of our past, positive about our future." I want to welcome Mr. Blodgett here today.

Mr. Ted Arnott: I'm very pleased to introduce Mike and Heather Shaw of Rockwood, who are in the gallery up above. They are the parents of Joey Shaw, our page from Wellington-Halton Hills.

Hon. Brad Duguid: I'm pleased to introduce Dr. Johanna Carlo, who's here today. Her daughter Samantha is one of our pages. Dr. Jo, who she's known as in the hockey world, is one of the best trainers in minor pro hockey in the province, and she's the physiotherapist for my son, so she keeps him on the ice.

Hon. John Wilkinson: I want to welcome Central Perth Elementary School from my riding to Queen's Park today. They're accompanied by their teachers Bevan Moir and Helen Aicken. The trip was made possible by a Speakup grant from the Ministry of Education's Student Voice program.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: I'm pleased to invite every MPP in the House today. It's Community Living Toronto day at Queen's Park. And it's Appetite for Awareness day in room 2012A after question period. So I hope that you will all be there to receive your lunch box.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): On behalf of page Carlyn Mandarano Sistilli—and also the member from St. Paul's—we'd like to welcome some guests of hers: Itta Mandarano, Vince, Teresa and Dominic. Welcome to Queen's Park today.

I'm delighted to introduce the ambassador of Vietnam, Mr. Nguyen Duc Hung, who is here to expand trading relationships between Vietnam and Ontario. The ambassador is also here today to present our colleague Tony Ruprecht with the international Peace and Friendship Among Nations medal after question period in committee room 2. Congratulations, Tony.

Ambassador, welcome to Queen's Park.

LEGISLATIVE PAGES

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd ask all members to join me in welcoming this group of legislative pages in the first session, and I'd ask the pages to assemble for introduction, please:

Sam Beleutz, Beaches-East York; Kerala Brendon, Hamilton East-Stoney Creek; Matthew Crawford, Brant; Kathleen Crump, Timmins-James Bay; Brittany Hesmer, Northumberland-Quinte West; David Laing, Oshawa; Carlyn Mandarano Sistilli, St. Paul's; Mariah Palantzas, Don Valley West; Ajoy Paul, Pickering-Scarborough East; Kate Paulson, Nepean-Carleton; Rebecca Penner, Essex; Stephen Rickert, Kitchener Centre; Sarah Rossi, Mississauga-Brampton South; Joseph Shaw, Wellington-Halton Hills; Jacob Squire, London North Centre;

Gerrit Wesselink, Thunder Bay-Superior North; Eileen Woolley, Haldimand-Norfolk; Elliott Yee, Barrie; and Kevin Zhang, Mississauga East-Cooksville. Apologies—Alexander Singh, York West.

Welcome to Queen's Park.

ORAL QUESTIONS

TAXATION

Mr. Randy Hillier: My question is for the Deputy Premier today. Minister, you've introduced a blended sales tax—the largest tax grab in our province's history. This BST is a tax on every person and on their everyday needs. We're seeing layoffs, bankruptcies, unemployment, and a have-not province now on the dole under your watch.

Let's forget the spin and the rhetoric for a moment and answer an honest question: We know you like this cradle-to-grave government, we all know that death and taxes are inevitable, but is it just a coincidence that you married the two by introducing the BS tax on funeral services?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I thank the member opposite for his question. I would remind the member opposite that first of all, with the very generous sales tax credit and the new home credit, with the cuts to corporate taxes, the cuts to personal taxes and the cut to the small business tax, in fact Ontarians are getting a multi-billion dollar tax cut.

With the assistance of the federal government—\$4.3 billion—with the urgings of all of the major economists in the province and with the urgings of poverty activist groups, we have taken a step that is designed to put this province back on a competitive footing. I'd remind the member opposite that their interim leader, the day after it was introduced, said that their party supported it. The problem they have is that they just can't—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary.
1040

Mr. Randy Hillier: Here he talks about tax cuts, and the expense and the thirst for more money just keeps rising and rising with this government. We all know that the BS tax was stuck into the budget against the will of your caucus—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I reminded the honourable member in a question over a week ago about the use of that term. He started out all right with it and then he changed, so I would just ask that he choose another way to describe the tax.

Mr. Randy Hillier: The BST tax was snuck into the budget against the will of your caucus and then everyone was whipped into supporting it.

The hallmark of that government is broken promises. Promises are issued, they're broken, they're reissued and they're re-broken. Such a drastic and sweeping tax grab as this BST tax ought to be an election issue. Minister,

why don't you break just one more of your many promises, for me and everyone—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you, Minister?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Again, I want to remind the member opposite that in fact the government has brought forward a package of tax reductions that are aimed to stimulate growth in this economy, that will create employment across this province, that will help us get out of this challenging world crisis bigger and better and stronger.

At this time, in this age, it is incumbent on governments to take decisive leadership. That is precisely what we've done. This policy is the right policy. It is challenging, but I submit to the member opposite, to the members of this House and to the people of Ontario, the consensus around doing this among all the advice we've had is it's the right thing to do. It's difficult and challenging, but we're committed to it. It's in the best interests of all Ontarians.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary?

Mr. Randy Hillier: More spin and rhetoric. You talk about stimulating growth: The only thing growing is your budget and your bureaucracy. You've banned light bulbs, you've banned trans fats and cellphones, but you haven't banned a bigger bureaucracy, higher taxes or higher unemployment.

Minister, use some common sense, be honest with the people and put this BST tax to them in the 2011 election.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: You know, it's interesting that at an all-candidates debate, not a single Tory leadership candidate said that they would repeal the tax. It seems to me the member opposite wants to have it both ways. This is not the time for governments or parties that want to have it both ways. It is time for leadership; it is time to build a stronger and better economy. This government is doing that. I invite the member and his colleagues running for the leadership of the party, if you're so opposed to it, stand up today, each one of you, and say you'll repeal it. We are doing this; it's important to the future of all Ontarians.

TAXATION

Mr. Randy Hillier: It's important that the minister, instead of just watching our debates, watch the bottom line over there and watch the growth in this government.

To the minister: We all know that the rats are the first to leave a sinking ship. With the departure of the minister of little economic development, your government is sinking, and the BST tax is just another hole in your leaky boat. I've watched you sell this tax grab but the facts don't add up. You've lost hundreds of thousands of private sector jobs and you've built 200,000 new public sector jobs. This latest tax grab is to pay for your bloated bureaucracy. Can you clarify to everyone how you're going to blow their hard-earned money?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The party of Drew and Frost and Davis has come to this.

The tax policy of this government is designed to cut taxes for individuals; it's designed to help low-income Ontarians; it's designed to help this province through the most challenging economic crisis the world has ever seen. It is designed to create jobs and it will create jobs when we come out of this downturn.

Again, the member opposite didn't answer my question. Why is it, when given the opportunity, not a single candidate for the leadership of that party said they would repeal the harmonized sales tax? Why? Because they supported it in their last platform. The Leader of the Opposition—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Randy Hillier: Unlike the other side, I do answer questions. I would repeal the HST.

Yesterday, the Premier was asked a question which he declined—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Start the clock.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Order. I did start the clock, just for the members' information. Please continue.

Mr. Randy Hillier: And I'll remind you, I don't break my promises, either.

Yesterday, the Premier was asked a question which he declined to answer. You and your colleagues are living in a bubble and you're out of touch with the hardships that face Ontario families. You fellows believe that government can never be too big. You haven't created new jobs or wealth, you've created new expenses and new taxes. But your ship hasn't sailed yet, even though your colleagues are in the lifeboat. Tell us how this BST is going to affect people—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Minister?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The government's economic policy is absolutely the right economic policy for the times and, to be specific, it will help get this province through the most difficult and challenging crisis in the world economy.

Apparently, the member has changed his position since the leaders' debate, so one down and three to go. I wonder how long it'll be before Mr. Hudak changes his mind, because when the member opposite proposed to close down the Human Rights Commission, something we strongly oppose, Mr. Hudak jumped right on board. And what about Christine Elliott? That'll be an interesting discussion to see. I wonder if she'll change her position and I wonder if there will be an internal debate, not only within the party but within the family on that particular issue.

At the end of the day, we have chosen the right policies in a very difficult time—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Final supplementary?

Mr. Randy Hillier: I'll remind the minister we're in difficult times because of you and your government. That's why we're in difficult times.

Yesterday, the Premier said the BST tax was the right thing. In a recent survey, 67% of the people in Ontario said it's the wrong tax at the wrong time. You and your former colleagues said you were in the business of picking winners and losers. What's clear under this Liberal government is everybody's a loser. Minister, why are you ignoring the people of this province and why aren't you giving them the full story of your broken promises and this McGuinty sales tax?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Perhaps the member opposite has missed the downturn in the world economy. Perhaps he's missed the fact that manufacturing jobs have declined at a much greater rate in the United States; that forestry jobs have been lost at a much greater rate in Newfoundland, Quebec, British Columbia; perhaps he missed the fact that there's been a crisis in world financial markets. We don't have the option to pretend about these matters. We have to confront the challenges head-on and we're doing that.

I had the opportunity to attend the Canadian finance ministers' meeting yesterday. We heard yet again of the enormous challenges that are facing this economy, not only Ontario's but Canada's—indeed, the world's.

1050

In fact, this policy is the right policy to take, and unlike the member opposite and his party, we are consistent, strong and united in our desire to make Ontario bigger, better and stronger, and we will be.

EXECUTIVE COMPENSATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Acting Premier. Yesterday, General Motors workers ratified an agreement where they made major concessions on wages, on benefits and on pensions. The Premier has indicated that a hard cap on executive compensation will be tied to the assistance provided to GM and Chrysler. My question is this: Why won't the government agree to extend the cap on all companies receiving government money?

Hon. George Smitherman: First and foremost, we do want to applaud the efforts that are being made by a broad collective of individuals, from workers, the leaders of companies and, certainly, representatives of a variety of governments, both national, and in the case of Ontario, a jurisdiction that is very, very dedicated to making investments in a fashion that will allow us to substantially preserve opportunities in the automotive sector in the province of Ontario. It has already been the precedent established relating to the issue of salary limitation for executives, and the Premier is on record, obviously, as the honourable member has alluded to.

I take her suggestion on further matters under advisement. Our focus at the moment is very much on trying to successfully complete these negotiations and, going for-

ward, ensure good prospects for workers in the province of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, sacrifices are being made, and not just in the auto sector. Workers across Ontario have accepted lower pay, reduced hours and fewer benefits just to keep their jobs.

I proposed a bill that would cap executive pay for companies receiving provincial money. I would like to ensure that high-flying executives make some of the same sacrifices that their employees are making right now, and help to put an end to the exorbitant golden handshakes and parachutes that we see all too often.

Since this government seems to accept the pay cap principle for GM and Chrysler, why won't it support a pay cap for all companies that receive government money?

Hon. George Smitherman: I think that what we see in the style and the content of this leader is a flashback to a time that most people would talk about in the context of the 1970s. In the case of Chrysler and the circumstances related to General Motors, obviously the extent to which governments and taxpayers are being relied upon to lend assistance is very high and very extraordinary in those circumstances.

Accordingly, we see it as appropriate to work in the area of caps related to compensation, but the honourable member's suggestion that this should translate across the breadth of the private sector, in all places where a business may receive some encouragement and support from government, is not a policy which we think is inviting investment in the province of Ontario.

I do suggest to the honourable member that rolling ourselves back to the ideological times of the 1970s is not the best approach to receive investment in the province—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Final supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Perhaps this minister knows that Rodney Mott was the CEO of Stelco for one year when it was sold to US Steel. Stock options allowed him to walk away with \$67 million and a leisurely retirement along the Carolina coast. Key to restructuring was \$150 million provided by the Ontario government just two years before Mott walked away.

With a hard cap on executive pay, government money would be used to sustain jobs instead of making executives rich. Why won't this government support a hard cap on executive pay for all companies that receive taxpayers' money?

Mr. Paul Miller: Disgusting.

Hon. George Smitherman: I think what is more disgusting, to take a word that was offered by another member from Hamilton, is that this honourable member continues to talk about Stelco but doesn't fess up for the responsibility that she and her mates have with respect to decisions that Howard Hampton made at the cabinet table in a previous government.

This is part of the dynamic related to the matter of pensions in the province of Ontario. And you can see that the honourable members, Howard Hampton, as an example, don't like to be reminded that they were part of a series of decisions which forced the government of Ontario to step in and prop up a pension fund because Howard Hampton designated it as too big to fail. We think it's appropriate to limit compensation in the areas we have, related to Chrysler and related to General Motors, but the further degree of intervention in the private sector that the party offers is not on—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): New question.

NUCLEAR WASTE

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Back to the Acting Premier. Last week, the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services expressed serious concerns about the safety of storing radioactive nuclear waste in his community of Sudbury. In fact, he urged Sudbury city council to veto any attempt whatsoever to store waste in their community. Yesterday the Premier said something different about nuclear waste. He said, "We know how to contain it and we know how to store it." Indeed, the McGuinty government has repeatedly assured Ontarians that nuclear power is safe.

How can Ontarians trust this government when a minister tells them one thing and the Premier tells them something entirely different?

Hon. George Smitherman: Perhaps it's because the honourable member hasn't had the privilege of serving in cabinet that she hasn't, Mr. Speaker, rationalized the circumstances where you are at once both—

Interjections.

Hon. George Smitherman: No; with respect, Mr. Speaker. The member's question suggests that a member of the cabinet can no longer be an MPP for the area that they represent, that they can no longer be a voice in the community.

The point is, with respect to the work that's going on by the nuclear waste management operation, to find a willing host. They're working through this process very diligently. They've been doing public forums established in 16 communities across the province of Ontario, and they seek to find a community that would be interested in the economic opportunities associated with the safe storage of nuclear product. That the honourable member takes that view in his community is the privilege of the local community—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: What's very clear is that this government is talking out of both sides of its mouth.

The Minister of Community Safety is not alone in his concerns, however: In 2005, the Nuclear Waste Management Organization concluded that there is no way to prove that storing nuclear waste underground will be safe. More and more communities, in fact, are saying no to nuclear waste. Temiskaming Shores, Kincardine and Toronto have all passed resolutions, signed agreements

or simply said no to nuclear waste. Just last October, the National Assembly of Quebec resolved that no nuclear waste could be brought into Quebec. The government says that it's looking for a willing community to host the waste.

What if no community in Ontario wants this dangerous waste? Will this government force it down citizens' throats?

Hon. George Smitherman: The honourable member seems incapable of even recognizing that it's a federal body, the Nuclear Waste Management Organization, that is involved in this process. They don't even have the respect—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Deputy.

Hon. George Smitherman: The Nuclear Waste Management Organization has established 16 different places where they're conducting seminars in local communities as this federal body seeks to find a willing host for nuclear material. We have, in our capacities through Ontario Power Generation at Darlington and in partnership with Bruce Power, very safe storage of that nuclear material which has been created through our multiple generations of use for the purposes of electricity generation. I'm delighted that the honourable member has agreed to come and visit that so she can learn more about the storage as it has gone on so far and be more informed about the discussion, as it goes forward, to find a willing host.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Without even having a community willing to store the current backlog of radioactive waste, the McGuinty government is signing on to produce even more waste. Even if we desperately needed the energy, that would be utterly, utterly irresponsible. But the fact is that we don't even need the energy from new nuclear power plants. In fact, energy demand is down 4% this year: 60 times this year we had so much surplus energy that we had to pay energy users to use it. Talk about conservation. The McGuinty government will be remembered as the government that built expensive nuclear reactors that simply were not needed. When will this government stop this madness and kick its nuclear addiction?

1100

Hon. George Smitherman: First off, I do want to say to the honourable member that we thank her for the compliment that she's offered, recognizing that the steps we've taken as a government have enhanced the reliability of electricity supply in the province of Ontario, because while they had the privilege of being in government, they didn't do anything.

With respect to nuclear, today in the province of Ontario that honourable member is benefiting substantially from nuclear power. It's all through our electrons, because it continues to be a very prominent source of electricity generation in the province of Ontario. We have plans to ensure that our nuclear fleet is renewed—not

new nuclear enhancing the capacity, but nuclear that will replace those units that come out of service. We think it's very important that we renew our nuclear fleet so that the people of the province of Ontario continue to have the advantage of one of the lowest climate-impact fuel sources to be found all across the planet. I encourage the honourable—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

FIREFIGHTERS

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: My question today is for the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services. Minister, do you agree that Ontario's volunteer firefighters should be treated as equal to Ontario professional firefighters and be included immediately under presumptive legislation?

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: I'll transfer it to the Minister of Labour.

Hon. Peter Fonseca: I say to the member—and I appreciate the question—that firefighters across the province do hazardous, life-threatening work. That is why two years ago we brought forward presumptive legislation for professional firefighters. Within that legislation there is a regulation, and our officials at the Ministry of Labour have been working with stakeholders, firefighters, AMO, the fire chiefs of Ontario. Just as early as two weeks ago, I had an opportunity to speak with the fire chiefs of Ontario in discussing this very important matter. I told them it was an active file at our ministry. We will continue to do that and we want to ensure that firefighters across the province of Ontario deserve those—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I will redirect the question to the Minister of Community Safety because I believe it is a community safety issue with the firefighters. Minister, you are aware that this House unanimously passed presumptive legislation two years ago. In fact, the bill passed in one day. All three parties agreed and it was passed unanimously. The legislation and its regulations were implemented immediately and benefited professional firefighters only.

On May 14, your government used your majority to defeat a private member's bill by my colleague that would have seen volunteer firefighters treated equally. Minister, by defeating Mr. Arnott's bill you have sent a very negative message to the folks of rural Ontario; thousands of volunteer firefighters, their families and the millions of residents they serve.

As the minister responsible for the well-being and safety of the firefighters of Ontario, what will you do to ensure that volunteer firefighters are included immediately under presumptive legislation?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: I say to the member, as all of us know, firefighters are crucial to all our communities across Ontario. And if any firefighter—professional, volunteer, part-time—has gotten ill, has gotten injured,

they can inform the WSIB. A claim can be made. The WSIB will take all of those claims very seriously and investigate and look into those claims.

With regard to the regulation the member speaks of, we continue to meet with all stakeholders, with the fire chiefs, with AMO and with the firefighters as we move forward to protect all Ontario workers, including our precious firefighters.

JURY SELECTION

Mr. Peter Kormos: To the Attorney General: The Attorney General knows that CPIC's code of ethics requires that if an investigation is conducted using CPIC, that it only be for criminal investigative purposes unless it has the consent of the person who is the subject of that check. Why is the Attorney General using the police to conduct CPIC checks of potential jurors to determine not only if they've ever been convicted, but if they've ever been charged, if they've ever been acquitted and if they've had dealings with the mental health system, when it's been done without the consent or even knowledge of those people?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: The issues raised by my colleague are very important ones. They are in fact issues before the Ontario Court of Appeal in one particular case.

Let me say with respect to the general issue that the principle of having a jury that is fair and impartial is at the heart of our system of justice. It's a principle that we are going to and are determined to uphold. In fact, we have had a practice direction to all crowns since 2006 making clear that impartiality is at the heart of the jury system, that that's the crown's duty, that any information obtained by the crown should be disclosed to the defence, and that if criminal record checks are obtained, that material should be disclosed to the defence so that everybody has access to the same information.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary.

Mr. Peter Kormos: The Attorney General knows full well that his own crown policy manual instructs that prosecutors should not request the police to undertake any investigations to the list of jurors other than criminal record checks. Yet his crown attorneys have been routinely calling upon the police to report back on charges laid, acquittals, disreputable persons—on any number of things that have nothing to do with the de facto conviction for an indictable offence, and there's been no disclosure to defence counsel.

What does this Attorney General say to us as to how long this has been going on, where it's been going on, and who's going to be held accountable for this clear breach of both CPIC standards and the crown attorneys' policy book, the Attorney General's own standards?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: Again, my friend raises very important issues, and he's right: Since 2006, there has been a clear direction, as he outlined, from the crown attorney—at 720 Bay—to all crowns throughout the province.

The cases he refers to are from one particular jurisdiction in the province of Ontario, both of which are

before the courts. But to ensure that impartiality is always at the heart of our jury system, we're making sure that the crown policy manual is being adhered to, and we're working with the privacy commissioner—and have already been in touch—to make sure that whatever else we do, a fair trial is ensured and the privacy rights of individuals are respected. We'll be working with the privacy commissioner and others and awaiting the decision of the Court of Appeal.

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mr. David Zimmer: I have a question for the Minister of Community and Social Services. Community Living Toronto is here for their annual lobby day. As you know, they work with Ontarians with severe developmental disabilities. It's an organization that every day makes a real difference in the lives of Ontarians with developmental disabilities. I see the results of their work every day in my riding of Willowdale.

You're the minister responsible for the developmental services sector. Minister, what are you doing to help the developmentally disabled, their community and their families?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: I'd like to thank the MPP for Willowdale for this question. Let me start by thanking and welcoming Community Living Toronto to Queen's Park for Community Living Day—one of our ministry's largest partners, and a partnership anchored on open dialogue and exchange of ideas.

When we first came to office, nowhere was the need for modernization greater than in the developmental sector. We heard loud and clear from people with developmental disabilities, their families and community agencies. This government has listened, and we have acted. Our government has closed the three remaining developmental sector facilities in Ontario, we passed Bill 77, and we've invested half a billion dollars in this sector. And the work is not yet done. That is why, working with organizations like Community Living Toronto and adding—

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The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. David Zimmer: Thank you, Minister. I do appreciate those initiatives and I know that you've got a positive relationship with the agencies and their families. But here's the real issue, Minister: Bill 77, the Services and Supports to Promote the Social Inclusion of Persons with Developmental Disabilities Act, received royal assent on October 8, 2008. That's seven months ago. The bill has yet to come into force. If there's any community that deserves and needs our help, it's this community and their families.

Minister, the simple question is, how much longer do families and persons with developmental challenges have to wait before the bill is proclaimed?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: The member is right: The bill has yet to be proclaimed because we are working hard on the vast number of regulations that are involved with a bill of this size. In the coming weeks, we will be posting our draft regulations on our ministry's website for public review and comment, and I will be posting minister's regulations in the fall of this year.

This was the process that was voted on and it is the open and transparent process that we will continue to follow. But let's not ignore the tremendous progress this government has already made in making Ontario's community inclusive for people with developmental disabilities. In total, we are now helping over 15,000 people with developmental disabilities live in the community close to their family and friends. Yes, we still have more to do, but we are proud of our accomplishments so far.

MUNICIPAL PLANNING

Mrs. Julia Munro: My question is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. My constituents in Innisfil are very concerned about the city of Barrie's desire to annex large sections of their community. The town and its citizens want to know if they will lose a big portion of their commercial tax base to Barrie.

Minister, will you commit today to preserving the economic viability and quality of life of the town of Innisfil?

Hon. Jim Watson: I'd like to thank the honourable member. I have had a couple of discussions with the honourable member about the issue and I'm pleased that she arranged to bring the mayor of Innisfil to my office—I guess that was on February 18. I thank her for attending that meeting.

This is a long-standing issue that goes back many decades. The province of Ontario, in its Places to Grow provincial policy statement documents, has indicated that Barrie is one of the growth areas in Simcoe county. We have said all along that we would like the local residents and the local elected officials to find a local solution. That's why I did bring together the mayor and members of council from Barrie, the warden, Mr. Guergis, as well as Mayor Jackson from Innisfil. We still would like them to find a local solution. But at the end of the day, if we're not able to find a local solution, we will work collaboratively to find a solution—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mrs. Julia Munro: Simcoe county is also worried about the economic risks. At your government's direction, they produced a growth plan that covers all of the county and the city of Orillia. Now there is a concern that a change to the boundary will have an impact on the plans of Simcoe county as a whole.

Can you assure my constituents and those of Simcoe county that any proposed changes will not have an adverse impact on the economic future of the area?

Hon. Jim Watson: As that matter falls under the jurisdiction of my colleague the Minister of Energy and Infrastructure, I will refer that to him.

Hon. George Smitherman: I want to thank the honourable member for the question. Like my colleague the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, I spent a fair bit of time with various municipal representatives, including the warden and the CAO of the county of Simcoe, the council and mayor of the city of Barrie, and the mayor and town administrator from Innisfil, as we've all been seeking out solutions which are designed to balance a variety of priorities.

Certainly, we have a high expectation that the growth plan will be abided. It seeks to limit sprawl and intensify the development in particular areas where the infrastructure is well-suited to it. Barrie is obviously one of those, as the honourable member has spoken. I do believe, as we move forward, the honourable member will see that we continue to seek to abide all of the good principles that were embedded in the growth plan and do so in a fashion that's—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE

Mr. Michael Prue: My question is to the Minister of Finance. A recommendation contained in the Financial Services Commission of Ontario, FSCO, five-year auto insurance review would slash insurance payouts for serious car injuries by 75%. It would impoverish victims, push health care costs onto the taxpayer and, quite frankly, enrich the auto insurance industry. The medical and rehabilitation cost for non-catastrophic injury is now capped at \$100,000; the recommendation would lower the cap to \$25,000.

My question: Will the Minister of Finance stand in this House today and make it clear that he will reject this wrongheaded recommendation made by FSCO?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: No, not today. We are wrapping up consultations on FSCO's proposed recommendations. It's the first time the government has conducted a five-year review of insurance regulation. We think that's the appropriate position to take. There is a range of other recommendations from FSCO that are in fact very consumer-friendly, so we will be wrapping up that consultation. I indicated that I would like to have those final recommendations done in June, so that we can move on.

I'd also like to take the opportunity to remind the member that as a result of this government's efforts, car insurance premiums have come down some 13% for all Ontarians since we took office. It's important to find that balance between insurers and customers, and we intend to do just that.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Michael Prue: I wish the minister would have assured this House and the people of Ontario today.

If implemented, this recommendation would seriously damage access to rehabilitation services for accident victims. The insurance industry says they are not making any money. Well, if you look at the records for last year, 2008, a 7.5% return on investment was not really anything to sneeze at. Car accident victims will be the clear

losers if the cap is lowered. I'm asking again: Will the minister stand in this House, not in June but today, and make it clear that this government will reject this wrong-headed recommendation?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Again, the answer is no. I'm continuing to wrap up consultations. I'm hearing from consumers across the province on a range of issues, not just that one. I think consultation is important, and I think we as a government want to build on the \$7 billion in premium savings Ontarians have experienced since we came to office in 2003.

I would also like to remind the member opposite that there are a variety of recommendations, many of which have been called for by consumers of auto insurance. We will find the right balance to protect the interests of Ontario motorists and consumers who purchase car insurance.

HEALTH CARE

Mr. Bruce Crozier: My question is to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. In my community and communities across Ontario, health care is a key issue. They want to know that we're doing everything we can to ensure that their families have access to a quality health care system. Most importantly, they want to know that when they are sick or their children are sick, they have quick and easy access to a health care provider.

Ontario is in need of more doctors. Too many families are without a family physician, and over the past several years we have made significant progress in training and recruiting more doctors in Ontario. However, I still hear from constituents who do not have a doctor. Ontario needs more doctors, both family physicians as well as specialists. It seems to me it would make sense that we increase the supply. Speaker, through you to the minister: What are we doing to train more doctors so more Ontarians have access to health care providers?

Hon. John Milloy: The member certainly raises a concern that I think is held by all members of the House. That's why I was very pleased last week to be at the McMaster satellite medical school in my own community, in Waterloo region, to announce we would be providing funding for 100 additional medical spaces across the province over the next three years. These medical spots will be located at five campuses and, as I said, phased in over the next three years. Along with the announcement of the spots, we announced \$35 million in capital to help support this expansion.

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In total, since 2003 we've increased first-year medical spots by 260 new spaces. That's a 38% increase.

We also opened a new medical school in northern Ontario, and its first class of 56 students will graduate later this week. As well, as I mentioned, we've created satellite—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Bruce Crozier: The medical school spaces initiative will no doubt help the province of Ontario train

more doctors to build a healthier Ontario. Still, while these students will be an asset to the province's health care system when they graduate, Ontarians need to know that the government's plan to increase doctors is working. Many residents of this province have expressed concern that they live in communities that are not adequately reached by health care professionals.

Minister, please tell the House today what steps this government is taking to ensure that Ontarians have better access to qualified health care professionals.

Hon. John Milloy: To the Minister of Health.

Hon. David Caplan: I want to thank my colleague for a very important question.

There's no doubt that the additional 100 medical school spaces and five programs across the province will make a difference in delivering high-quality health care. We're also finding that more and more medical students are choosing family practice.

In 2008, 772 physicians graduated in Ontario and are moving into practice. We're projecting 822 physician graduates in 2009. That's the highest number recorded in the history of this province.

Access to primary care remains a top priority for me and for members on this side of the House. That's why we created 150 family health teams consisting of doctors, nurses, dietitians, social workers and other health professionals. Over the next two years we're going to add another 50 family health teams, as committed in our platform, targeting rural and underserved communities—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

DRIVER LICENCES

Mr. John O'Toole: I'll give the Minister of Transportation a moment to get back to his seat.

Minister, over the weekend, I had the opportunity to visit some of the tourist attractions in my riding of Durham, including the Bowmanville Zoo and Jungle Cat World. Minister, the local attractions in Durham are ready for the 2009 tourist season. You would know that last weekend was Memorial Day weekend in the United States. The operators expressed concern about the possibility of a downturn in visitors from the United States.

Minister, in your own results-based briefing book you say, "The ministry is also pursuing new and innovative technologies to ensure that our programs and services meet people's needs...."

What steps are you taking as minister to ensure that our friends from the United States are welcome in Ontario and have easy and efficient access across the border?

Hon. James J. Bradley: First of all, applause is coming from my friend from Renfrew because he recognizes that I work with the Minister of Tourism very closely to ensure that our American friends are aware of the many attractions that are available not only in the

Niagara Peninsula, which I know the member wanted to talk about, but right across Ontario and in Durham, which he represents. We have appropriate signage on the highways to allow people to know where the various sites are that they can visit. We work in consultation with the federal government on ensuring, as practically as possible, that people are able to cross our borders and that when they cross the border they have all the information available to them—including the wonderful kiosks that we have and the actual offices we have under the auspices of the Ministry of Tourism to provide the necessary information.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. John O'Toole: Minister, you know that cross-border travel is a two-way street. There are 35 million cars a day across the border.

This brings us to the topic of the enhanced driver's licence that many Ontarians hope to use to cross the border this season—actually, required on June 1. You've made promises that this would be available as we speak, and the deadline is next week. Minister, what have you done to ensure that the enhanced driver's licence will be available to Ontario drivers as the new border regulation comes into effect on Monday? And I guess the supplementary part to this is, what does the new enhanced driver's licence have to do with ensuring that American tourists are able to visit Ontario easily?

Hon. James J. Bradley: The member is very perceptive. This is almost like a set-up question, I must say.

Interjections.

Hon. James J. Bradley: We didn't set it up. I want to tell you that we didn't set it up.

Precisely by Ontario developing an enhanced security licence system, we have encouraged the state of New York, the state of Michigan and other states in the United States to duplicate this effort. It is known that, generally speaking, Americans are less inclined to get a passport than Canadians would be, so we wanted to ensure that when crossing our border, we would have an opportunity to have an enhanced security licence. I'm pleased to say that New York state has this in effect now, that Michigan is about to have it in effect, and that as a result, it's going to make it much easier for our American friends—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

Mr. Rosario Marchese: My question is to the Minister of Education. The Ontario Public School Boards' Association had this to say about your school information finder website:

"While all parents are interested in information about academic achievement, we concur with the expressed views that data about income, immigration and so on are not nearly so relevant to parents as whether the school has an adjoining child care centre, after-4 programs, extracurricular activities and other wraparound services...."

"We respectfully request that, notwithstanding the changes that have been made this week"—meaning a while ago—"the website be taken down pending the output of the working group."

Minister, the Ontario Public School Boards' Association, with which you work very closely, has asked that you take this website down. Why have you so casually dismissed them?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know that the member opposite understands that we have moved to put in place a process to have a discussion about exactly the issues he's talking about: What more information should we have on the school information finder that would allow parents and community members to have a full picture of a profile of a school? All of the stakeholders—and I know the member opposite referenced some other people who have questions about the school information finder—will be invited to have input into that conversation.

I believe that that is the appropriate way forward, given that I believe parents do want to have information about the profile of schools so that they can reference what's going on at their own school and also put that in a context. So I look forward to that conversation with all stakeholders, including the Ontario Public School Boards' Association.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: You and the Premier have remained steadfast in your desire to have that demographic information on the website. You have not changed your mind on that.

There's something more we want to ask you about this. As you know, schools have attendance boundaries that determine which schools children are entitled to attend. The Ontario Public School Boards' Association is concerned that, as a result of your shopping cart approach to education, there is now an implied assumption that parents may choose to send their children to any school. This would have enormous implications for school boards, as you know. Will you guarantee that despite the shopping catalogue approach of your website, the school boards will still be able to establish and enforce attendance boundaries for neighbourhood schools?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: First of all, the member opposite knows perfectly well that that comparator, that school bag function, has been taken off the website. There was concern about it. Part of the discussion that we will have at that round table is what information should be available on the school information finder.

The member opposite says that we've remained steadfast in the face of criticism. The reality is that we work with stakeholders every single day. We make decisions based on good policy and based on input. The fact that there may be a disagreement with some stakeholders on a particular issue doesn't mean that the world is ending. It doesn't mean that our relationships are falling apart. What it means is that we will have the conversation, and those relationships will be stronger because we've had that conversation.

MINING INDUSTRY

Mr. Bill Mauro: My question is for the Minister of Northern Development and Mines regarding the Rosehart report. As members of the House are well aware, in March 2008 our government welcomed Dr. Robert Rosehart's report entitled *Northwestern Ontario: Preparing for Change*. The report was a result of the 2007 budget announcement in which our government appointed Rosehart as the northwestern Ontario economic facilitator to work with local people and businesses to help inspire a new generation of growth in the northwest.

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Throughout the year, Dr. Rosehart held over 120 meetings with stakeholders and government reps, and met with 16 municipalities and more than 20 First Nation leaders. I was pleased to meet with Dr. Rosehart and provide him with my recommendations as well. The final report contained 47 recommendations.

Minister, could you please update the House on the progress that has been made since receiving Dr. Rosehart's recommendations last March?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: I want to thank my colleague from Thunder Bay—Atikokan for the question and for his strong support for what Dr. Rosehart has worked on over the last year and a half.

Certainly my ministry is excited about Dr. Rosehart's work and very pleased by the contributions that were made by many northern residents, businesses and stakeholders. Since receiving Dr. Rosehart's report last year, significant progress has been made to implement almost half of the 47 recommendations that were put forward.

This truly is considerable progress, as many of the recommendations represent long-term investments that will need support from the federal government, for example. Dr. Rosehart has clearly acknowledged that and acknowledged the progress that we've made as well, and we also want that to be considered in the growth plan for northern Ontario.

Certainly I'm happy and encouraged by the progress that's been made so far, and I really do feel this report demonstrates our government's commitment to ensuring that northwestern Ontario has a—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Bill Mauro: I think all northerners would agree that Rosehart's reports and recommendations for northwestern Ontario are very important. The region faces many unique opportunities and challenges, during both favourable and difficult economic times, and it's good to see that during this current period of uncertainty our government is working with northerners to create a more prosperous future for our region.

Minister, your ministry's Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Corp. is in place to further grow the north's economy, and since 2003, 9,360 new jobs have been created in northern Ontario through the use of this fund. I understand that expanding the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Corp. programs was a recommendation put forward by

the Rosehart report. Could you please tell the House if any progress has been made on implementing this specific recommendation.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: Thanks again to my colleague for the question. I am very happy to report that last week in Thunder Bay I was able to announce that the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Corp. is launching a new northern Ontario entrepreneur program. This new program is certainly consistent with one of the recommendations made by Dr. Rosehart; in fact, he called it one of his key project recommendations.

It's a pan-northern initiative that will fuel the entrepreneurial spirit that drives innovation, creates jobs and promotes economic growth throughout northern Ontario. This program will expand upon the young entrepreneur program, a very successful program which had an age restriction in place—that will be gone—and there will be other programs also in support of private sector investments. We are offering up to \$125,000 for people to put their ideas for new businesses up for application to our heritage fund.

I want to thank Dr. Rosehart for all the hard work he's done—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

GOVERNMENT REGULATIONS

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: My question is for the Minister of Government Services. On February 17, I asked a question in the Legislature about what was happening with Ted Kindos, owner of Gator Ted's in Burlington. As you know, his issue is a patron's challenge to allow medicinal marijuana to be smoked, regardless of your no-smoking act.

The minister stated: "I know Gator Ted. He runs an establishment in my hometown.... He's caught between ... a regulatory rock and a hard place. This government is determined to make sure that we find a way to support Ted Kindos...."

Well, it's three months later, Mr. Minister. Mr. Kindos is facing a tribunal at the Human Rights Commission. He needs action, not your platitudes. What have you done to get Ted Kindos out of your regulatory jam?

Hon. Ted McMeekin: First of all, it's not our regulatory jam. As I suspect you know, Mr. Speaker, we administer the federal act on behalf of the feds. I can say to the honourable member opposite that we continue to be very concerned about Mr. Kindos, and we have done a number of things, notwithstanding the fact that this is before the Human Rights Tribunal and we're somewhat restrained. I have written to the federal Minister of Health suggesting that, since amendments to the act that we administer on behalf of the feds are currently before a standing committee, it would be appropriate for them to take action with respect to regulations. I've also copied all members of that committee, and we've heard back from the members of that committee that those potential revisions are under serious consideration even as I speak.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: Here we go yet again: "It's not our problem. It's somebody else's problem"—and this man is going to lose his business.

Mr. Kindos has been told by the Ontario Human Rights Commission that he must permit a patron to smoke marijuana on his premises, and yet the Alcohol and Gaming Commission has told him he will be shut down if this person is allowed to light up. Ted Kindos has been playing a sick game of who's on first and what's on second as a result of this government's contradictory approach to tobacco versus marijuana smoke. Mr. Kindos is up to bat, Minister. You have thrown him two curveballs. Are you going to let him strike out?

Hon. Ted McMeekin: We don't throw curveballs on this side of the House. We deal very straight up with situations. We're right down the middle of the plate.

I can tell you that in addition to monitoring this situation very closely, the federal government has recently stated to us that smoking marijuana for medical purposes in a public place and potentially exposing others to the drug's effects is unacceptable. So we take them at their word on that. As they're before the committee actually dealing with potential regulatory changes, we anticipate that they'll take their responsibility seriously and do what needs to be done to protect honest, hard-working, good business people like Mr. Kindos.

NEWBORN SCREENING

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour le ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée.

Did you know that Ontario is the only province in Canada where the blood screening tests for celiac disease are not covered by the provincial government? Celiac disease affects about one out of 100. There are 107 of us in here; chances are, one of us has it and probably does not know. But if celiac disease is not detected early, those affected are exposing themselves to terrible complications: malnutrition, anemia, cancer, infertility, and the list goes on, all costing the health care system a significant amount of money. Yet the treatment, which is a gluten-free diet, does not cost the health care system a single penny. Minister, why won't Ontario cover this simple preventive measure?

Hon. David Caplan: The fact of the matter is that Ontario has the most extensive newborn screening program anywhere in Canada. It's because of the efforts of this government that we have expanded screening, and we always look for additional opportunities for that and for many other procedures. It's been regrettable that we've seen members opposite who have not supported the direction to expand and enhance services right across the province.

I thank the member for bringing this forward. I can assure the member that we are always looking for opportunities to provide additional help and support and to screen for diseases. We're going to continue with that approach as we move forward in the province of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The time for question period has ended.

VISITOR

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd ask all members to join me in welcoming a former member, Norm Jamison, who represented Norfolk in the 35th Parliament. Welcome back to Queen's Park today, Norm.

There being no deferred votes, this House stands recessed until 3 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1139 to 1500.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I want to take this opportunity to welcome Mr. Wayne Wettlaufer back to the chamber. Wayne represented Kitchener in the 36th Parliament and Kitchener Centre in the 37th Parliament. Welcome back to Queen's Park, Wayne.

Mr. Jeff Leal: They haven't arrived yet, but they will be. It's a grade 11 history class from St. Peter's Secondary School from the riding of Peterborough. The teachers are Ms. Peggy Sullivan and Ms. Bernadette Peters. I know we'll welcome them. They'll be in the west members' gallery shortly; I think they're just being filed in.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is that Bernadette Peters, the actress?

Mr. Jeff Leal: This is just one of the more famous members of the Peters family of Peterborough. They could be distant relatives, and if they are distant relatives, I know you'd like to welcome them on your behalf. I think they are starting to file in now.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I know the Speaker shouldn't be participating in debate, but he will in this case. The Speaker's original last name is Pidwerbeski, and the chances of the Peters and Pidwerbeskis being related are pretty slim there.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

RELAY FOR LIFE

Mr. Bill Murdoch: This Friday, May 29, students at Sacred Heart High School in Walkerton will be participating in this year's Relay for Life. Relay for Life is a fundraiser and awareness event put on by the Canadian Cancer Society. From this week until the end of fall, students and communities throughout Canada will be participating in events to bring awareness about cancer to the forefront and celebrate the lives of those who have won and lost their battle with cancer.

Relay for Life is a 12-hour, non-competitive overnight event. Teams of 10 people take turns walking around a track to raise funds to help make cancer history. The students of Sacred Heart High School will be putting on their 12-hour event this Friday.

When speaking to the students who chose to participate in the fundraiser, many spoke about knowing a

family member, friend or teacher who had cancer and what they'd gone through. The students told me that by participating in Relay for Life they will be hoping to help support leading-edge research for all forms of cancer. These students also wanted to get other students in the school informed about cancer and help make sure that many of them are educated on when and how cancer occurs. The Canadian Cancer Society actively supports educating people of all ages about cancer and works publicly to make sure that cancer prevention is a top priority at all levels of government.

Relay for Life events are taking place throughout my riding of Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound and throughout the province of Ontario. I would encourage my colleagues and citizens of Ontario to join a relay team, donate or stop by one of the local Relay for Life events to learn more about the Canadian Cancer Society and how to prevent cancer and make it history.

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I wanted to make a statement today around the whole issue of the school information finder website that the ministry has put up and to reflect the views of teachers and parents on this particular matter.

The ministry has facilitated a collection of data concerning the level of income of parents in a school, the level of education, the number of immigrant kids who are in that school and the number of special education kids who are in the school. We believe that collection of information and the facility that it allows parents to be able to look at—for what purpose, we don't know. We find that collection reprehensible and repugnant, totally unnecessary, and we have the support of teacher federations such as OECTA, OSSTF and ETFO.

Today, in a question, I said that the Ontario Public School Boards' Association is on board and against this. They urge the minister to get rid of that site, because clearly it's not useful to anyone. If it has information around whether a school has a teacher-librarian, a physical education teacher, a music teacher, or a daycare, that would be useful for parents to know, but this demographic information that talks about the level of income, the level of education, special ed and recent immigrants can only hurt the parents and those students in those schools. People should call the minister and tell her it's wrong.

COMMUNITY CUP

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: I rise today to share with the members of this House, the people of Ottawa and all Ontarians the very special annual event known as the Community Cup, a multicultural soccer tournament and activity day held in my riding of Ottawa Centre on June 28.

Organized by the Catholic Immigration Centre of Ottawa, the Community Cup welcomes all visitors to

explore the many activities taking place throughout the day, while 24 teams compete in both skill and spirit to earn the coveted cup.

This soccer tournament represents the very epitome of community building that is so essential for the ongoing growth of our open and welcoming Canadian society. With open arms and quick feet, the great people of Ottawa have utilized this outstanding opportunity for five years now to build long-lasting, positive relationships through friendly competition.

There will be many other activities and services to be had at this year's Community Cup beyond just soccer. The community tent, hosted by 25 different Ottawa community agencies, will have something for all visitors, from volunteering and job opportunities to health information and immigrant services. Or visit the language village to learn one of 12 languages in fun and interactive 20-minute sessions. There will also be fun for the whole family, with live entertainment, an international food bazaar, HOPE volleyball-inspired pickup games and the kids' zone.

I'm proud that our government wholeheartedly supports the Ottawa and new Canadian community as a banner sponsor of this event. Thanks to a \$10,000 community builders' grant from the Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration, this year's Community Cup will be bigger and better than ever.

Finally, I would like to recognize the hard work and leadership—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

PINGLE'S FARM MARKET

Mr. John O'Toole: I rise today to pay tribute to a very successful operation in my riding, Pingle's Farm Market on Taunton Road East.

Colleen and Walter Pingle were recently honoured with a 2009 Farm Marketers of the Year Award from the Ontario Farm Fresh Marketing Association. This is a tribute to their hard work, dedication and vision in building an important destination for farm-fresh products and family fun. The market started 22 years ago as a simple picnic at the side of the road. Today the market has grown to include not only a market but also a pick-your-own operation, an educational school tour facility, a gift shop, greenhouse and special seasonal family activities.

I'd like to congratulate Walter and Colleen and their staff at Pingle's Farm Market for their leadership, innovation and for being named 2009 Farm Marketers of the Year. Come to visit Pingle's Farm Market, a terrific family destination located at the north end of Courtice Road in the community of Clarington in the region of Durham.

I fully expect that on June 16, the Minister of Agriculture, the Honourable Leona Dombrowsky, whom I personally invited, will attend, and it will be a great day to celebrate agriculture in Durham region.

ONTARIO VETERINARY COLLEGE

Mrs. Liz Sandals: I'm pleased to rise today to speak of two great projects under way at the Ontario Veterinary College at the University of Guelph.

Yesterday, OVC officially opened their large animal isolation unit. This sophisticated state-of-the-art patient housing and infection control facility is the first component of the new OVC Health Sciences Centre. This project was made possible thanks in part to funding from the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. The ministry provided \$25 million to the University of Guelph to assist the province in enhancing our ability to prevent and respond to outbreaks of communicable animal diseases.

I also participated recently in the sod-turning for the Hill's Pet Nutrition Primary Healthcare Centre. This is also part of the overall redevelopment of the Ontario Veterinary College. This project is supported by a \$9.5-million investment from the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities and a \$5-million contribution from Hill's Pet Nutrition.

The new primary health care centre will allow veterinary students to experience working in a typical small animal clinic, with emphasis on the importance of animal nutrition and wellness as well as hands-on clinical experience.

By investing in these clinical and research facilities, we are ensuring our veterinary students get experience they need to practise better—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.
1510

KIDS' FISHING DAY

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: I'd like to express my sincere thanks and appreciation to all the groups and volunteers who worked so hard for our ninth annual Kids' Fishing Day at Heber Down Conservation Area this past Saturday—another record-setting day. A great crowd of kids and parents alike came out to enjoy the beautiful sunny weather and take part in a fun-filled day of fishing and outdoor activities.

There was no cost for the event, and children were able to take part in many activities, including conservation, wetland and trapping displays, lure-making, face-painting, a casting competition, fish identification and a free lunch.

Many groups and organizations gave their time and effort to this special day. I'd like to thank Ducks Unlimited; CLOCA; OFAH; Zone E; Kids, Cops and Canadian Tire; Muskies Canada; MNR, Aurora district; Ontario Sporting Dog Association; Ontario Deerhound Association; Oshawa community health; South Oshawa Teen Council; Durham Regional Police; Pickering Rod and Gun Club; Lindsay Trappers Council; Valu-Mart Lindsay; Emm's Sports; Hawgtown Bassmasters; Eastview Boys and Girls Club; Simcoe Hall Settlement House; South Central Ontario Big Game Association; WT Hawkins; OPG; Calvary Baptist Church; and the Oshawa Professional Firefighters Association as well as

Westmount Kiwanis for all their help, along with Doug and Roli for doing the fish fry—and yes, Mr. O'Toole did show up. While Norm Monaghan's tireless work and dedication were greatly missed this year, he will never be forgotten.

As always, a special thanks goes out to Walter Oster and the Toronto Sportsmen's Show, who, year after year, contribute to the success of kids' fishing days right across Ontario.

I'd like to quote Sandra Sweet from Simcoe Hall Settlement House:

"It is a challenge to develop and instill appreciation for the environment in a child who has not experienced nature. How can we expect young people to respect and protect the future of our natural resources when they're not exactly sure what those natural resources are?"

Thanks again to everyone who made this experience possible for the children of our community.

GUYANA INDEPENDENCE DAY

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: I rise today to pay tribute to the people of the Republic of Guyana as they celebrate their 43rd independence anniversary. On May 26th, 1966, the colony of British Guiana was granted political independence from Britain and called Guyana. Guyana is a native Amerindian word that means "land of many waters." Guyana is also a land of many races, with East Indians and African Guyanese comprising the bulk of the population. In spite of the race riots of the early 1960s and political turmoil prior to and following political independence, the Guyanese people have continued peaceful coexistence, especially between the two major ethnic groups.

The 1992 elections in post-independence Guyana marked a new chapter in that nation's history. Dr. Cheddi Jagan, who's considered the father of the Guyanese nation, became the first democratically elected president under free and fair elections.

Canada is home to over 200,000 Canadian Guyanese of all races, and they continue to make indelible contributions to our country and the province of Ontario.

I wish to share with this House a very small little story. The Prime Minister of Guyana, in unveiling a statue of Sir James Douglas on August 27, 2008, at Helena, Mahaica, in Guyana, described Sir Douglas as "Guyana's first gift to Canada as he was the first to work towards making Canada the country it is today." The father of British Columbia was Sir James Douglas, born 1803 in Mahaica, Guyana. Sir James Douglas became governor of British Columbia.

I ask all members to join me in extending our best wishes to all Guyanese Canadians in Ontario as they celebrate the 43rd anniversary of Guyana's independence.

YORK MEMORIAL COLLEGIATE INSTITUTE

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I rise in the House today to acknowledge and congratulate York Memorial high

school in my riding of York South-Weston. This year marks 80 years of providing exceptional education and support to students, residents and the community alike.

Since first opening its doors to the students of the old York community in 1929, thousands upon thousands of students have passed through its halls and filled its classrooms. A recent celebration brought many of those individuals back to the school where they spent some of their most engaging and, I am sure, most memorable times.

On May 9, I had the pleasure of participating in a reunion that brought together generations of alumni, teachers, staff, parents and students to relive memories old and new. There is no feeling like that of reconnecting with old friends who have, over the years, gone on to do different things in life. I understand that MPP Kevin Flynn, for example, the member from Oakville, attended York Memorial.

The diverse life and career paths that York Memorial alumni have taken are a testament to the rich and multi-faceted educational experience that the school continues to proudly offer. Today I rise to reflect on and celebrate an historic educational institution that not only honours a rich history but reflects the present-day community spirit of York South-Weston.

ENERGY CONSERVATION

Mrs. Carol Mitchell: I rise to speak about a very important and worthy initiative from the Ontario Power Authority happening today right in front of the Legislature.

Today, members of this Legislature and staff can go out front to the OPA booth and make the "Leg. pledge" by asking to "Count me in" to the province's energy conservation challenge.

Ontario's second province-wide Energy Conservation Week took place from May 17 to May 23. The conservation week marked the launch of a summer-long energy efficiency campaign, culminating in a mid-August Community Challenge Day.

Over the past few weeks the energy conservation team have been gathering pledges across the province, and to date, over 10,000 Ontarians have made the pledge to become more energy-efficient. On Community Challenge Day, it is expected that Ontarians will use all the tools they have learned about over the course of the summer to reduce their consumption.

More information about Community Challenge Day will be released in the coming weeks, so stay tuned and find out what you can do to help this great initiative succeed.

Conservation has been one of the cornerstones of this government's mandate to make the province greener and cleaner. I ask all members of this Legislature to join with me in saying "Count me in" to a brighter future for all Ontarians, in front of the Legislature. Sign up today.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

IMMIGRANTS' SKILLS

Hon. Michael Chan: I rise to bring the honourable members up to date on the steps our government took last week to strengthen the economy by investing in the skills of newcomers.

People remain Ontario's number one asset. The advantages of a highly educated and skilled workforce are beyond debate.

Today's newcomers are the most highly trained in our history. In fact, about 70% of adult newcomers bring post-secondary education or training. It is critical for the economy to put newcomers' talents to work as quickly as possible.

I was therefore pleased to announce last week an investment of more than \$38 million in 38 bridge training programs across Ontario. This will help 10,000 newcomers get jobs that match their expertise.

Bridge training programs help newcomers bridge international qualifications and experience into Ontario requirements and practices. These projects offer a range of support to help newcomers get licensed and get jobs. Bridge training projects provide a range of support services, such as skills assessment, technical training, local work experience, language training specific to occupations, and mentorship.

Since 2003, more than 180 projects have helped 30,000 highly skilled newcomers get jobs in their field. Here are some of the results: The University of Toronto's international pharmacy graduate project has improved the pass rate on the pharmacy licensing examination from 20% to a whopping 90%; 90% of participants who complete the CARE bridge training program for internationally trained nurses obtain employment within six months; and Hire Immigrants Ottawa, a project sponsored by United Way Ottawa, has helped almost 600 skilled newcomers get jobs in their field.

Success is reflected in the feedback on these programs, from employers who have been able to recruit highly skilled workers, and from newcomers who, instead of seeing their skills eroded, are able to take advantage of opportunities to work in the field related to their studies.

We anticipate more of the same return on our latest investments in bridge training. The projects announced last week will have a wide-ranging impact. They cover an array of professions and trades, including health care, financial services, biotechnology, engineering, the environment, information technology and law, and they touch many communities: the GTA, Guelph, Hamilton, Kitchener-Waterloo, London, Ottawa and Windsor.

Last week's funding announcement was just the first stage in the expansion of this proven strategy. As well, I am pleased to advise that the 2009 Ontario budget commits a further \$50 million to expand bridge training programs over the next two years.

1520

Investing in people is a key part of our government's plan to create jobs and strengthen the Ontario economy. We are helping newcomers put their skills and talents to work for themselves, their families, and ultimately for Ontario. We know our prosperity tomorrow depends on the actions we take today. This is why we are investing in the skills of Ontarians.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Responses?

Mr. John O'Toole: I want to commend the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, the Honourable Michael Chan, for recognizing the important contribution that people make to Ontario. As he said, the theme is investing in people. Investing in newcomers to Ontario is a very important step, which would be supported by all members of the House, I'm sure. Building a strong Ontario for each of us to share in, including the new Canadians, is an important commitment.

I'm always concerned when the government makes these announcements and I have to look with some uncertainty at where the funding really is and where it's coming from. A couple of years ago, without being critical, there were announcements made to organizations out of a fund that wasn't clearly outlined in the budget, which was questioned. Some of that was the second line training included in the bridge announcement today. But I do want to commend the minister for doing the right thing: making sure that people who come to Ontario, or Canada, for that matter, have the skills to participate in our wonderful society.

At this point in our comments it would be clear that I would like to share some of the time with Mr. Bailey, who's actually the critic in this field.

Mr. Robert Bailey: It's a pleasure for me to be able to respond today, on behalf of the official opposition, regarding bridge training for new immigrants. We recognize the importance that new Canadians play in our economy. Many immigrants to Canada are already well educated and highly trained, but the system has prohibited them from being able to fully participate in our labour force.

We are glad whenever the government gets serious about helping immigrants participate fully in our economy. However, there's less to this announcement than meets the eye. Actually, this is the trifecta of reannouncements. Funding was announced in the budget, reannounced again last week and reannounced here today. I think the minister may be going for a new record. Actually, this announcement isn't really much of an announcement. Under the Ontario Labour Mobility Act, the province is mandated to support skilled immigrants. So all they're doing is announcing what they're obligated to do in the first place.

We have some concerns on this side of the House that the money that is being spent on the bridge training centres will be spent on administration and not actually train anyone, as the member from Durham so aptly put; he pointed those issues out.

This government has a bad reputation for announcing grand programs that don't actually do anything at the end of the day. Time and again we have highlighted where the government's grand announcements don't actually translate to anything on the ground. I would hope that this isn't one of those announcements.

This government also needs to be careful that it is training people for jobs that actually exist. As a former minister said, this government is going to get into picking winners and losers. They just have a bad reputation for doing that. They pick the wrong ones. I hope they aren't trying the same thing with job training.

If you want a highly skilled workforce, the government needs to lower the apprenticeship ratio—that would be one good example right there—so that more people can get into the trades. When the economy does turn around, if and when it does, there is no point in helping new immigrants to be trained if they can't actually access those apprenticeship systems, because there are more applicants than there are actual spaces.

I would hope that this announcement is followed closely by an announcement of the reduction of apprenticeship ratios. That's something that in this province would really get training going and would be something laudable that this government could do.

In closing, I'd like to thank the member for Durham for taking part of that and introducing me.

Mr. Michael Prue: It's my privilege today to talk about the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration's policy pronouncements. For myself, I have to say that I value intrinsically what newcomers bring to this country. I value it because I spent more than 20 years of my life working for Immigration Canada before I became a politician. I saw people getting off the plane with hope in their eyes. Oftentimes they had very little. Some were escaping from poverty, some were escaping from war-torn countries, and some of them came leaving good lives behind. They came not so much for themselves but for their children and for the opportunities that would be available. To see that opportunity when it happens in this country is a wonderful thing, but to see when it doesn't happen is a shame.

I stand here to say that for every immigrant who has succeeded in this country—and literally hundreds of thousands have—there have been others who have not been so successful. It has been a waste of their talent and a frustration to those individuals.

When you go out into the community and meet people from racialized communities, they talk to you about their talents not being recognized. Whether it be an auditor, an accountant from Bangladesh who is not being recognized, whether it be a doctor from India who is not being recognized or whether it be an engineer from China who is not being recognized, we need to make sure that we use all of their skills and abilities, the ones that they brought with them—not to de-skill them, not to give them jobs in the same field at a lower level and at lower pay, but to use everything that they innately bring with them.

We need to understand in this country that poverty, increasingly, is racialized. If you look at the United Way of Greater Toronto and the 13 communities where they have shown that poverty is starting to take a foothold, most of those are communities where newcomers come to live in Canada. They are highly immigrant communities, they are places of first landing where people come and settle, and you will find that that is the face of poverty here today. We need to start keeping statistics on that, and we cannot be afraid to keep those kinds of statistics. I welcome the initiatives by the United Way and hope the government will continue to keep those statistics and understand who in fact is really poor and why they are being kept in poverty.

We need to do a number of things in order to get people out there to work. We need to increase our English as a second language. I don't think we're doing nearly enough of that in this province. French is the second language in some communities. We need to increase the services that are available through LINC. But, most importantly, we need to give opportunities for full universal child care. If anything is going to release particularly the newcomer women, it's going to be child care so they can go to school, so that they can find work and so that they know that their loved ones—their children—are being looked after while they're out there learning how it is to fully function and participate in Ontario and Canadian society.

Ultimately, though, I want to speak just for the minute or so that's left about what Ontario really should be doing. I've said this many times in this House, and it deserves telling again today: In 1976, the government of Quebec took a step that no other government has taken, not one other government in this country. They developed their own grid system for immigrants. They went out there and they decided that they were going to get into the immigration game, and they are allowed to do so under section 92 of the British North America Act. The government of Canada helps and has continued to pay for them to do that, so that in Quebec they have had 33 years of continuing experience on how to deal with newcomers.

If you want to know as an immigrant where you are most likely to be successful, where you are most likely to get the programs to learn French, where you are most likely to have your skills recognized, where you are most likely to get child care, and where you are most likely to be successful for yourself and for your family, you will find that not here in Ontario, unfortunately, but in Quebec.

If this government is truly serious about recognizing the skills and abilities of newcomers, then I think we have to do some of the things that were contained in the Quebec Immigration Act. We are going to have to go out and recruit those immigrants. We are going to have to recognize their skills, and look at those skills and give them documentation for those skills before they get here. Can you imagine saying, "You will be a doctor when you arrive in Canada"—not having to come here and take test

after test after test, but be recognized before you come? That is what Ontario should be doing. We should be funding those programs. We should be looking to the law. We should be taking the bold step. It has worked for 33 years in Quebec. It is time that the government of Ontario took that bold initiative.

1530

PETITIONS

TAXATION

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: I rise in the House today to read a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas residents in Burlington do not want the McGuinty 13% sales tax, which will raise the cost of goods and services they use every day; and

"Whereas the McGuinty 13% blended sales tax will cause everyone to pay more for gasoline for their cars, heat, telephone, cable and Internet services for their homes, and will be applied to house sales over \$400,000; and

"Whereas the McGuinty 13% blended sales tax will cause everyone to pay more for meals under \$4, haircuts, funeral services, gym memberships, newspapers, and lawyer and accountant fees; and

"Whereas the blended sales tax grab will affect everyone in the province: seniors, students, families and low-income Ontarians;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the McGuinty Liberal government not increase taxes for Ontario consumers."

I agree with this petition; I will affix my name and give it to page Elliott.

POWER PLANT

Mr. Dave Levac: This petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, signed by clan mothers, subchiefs and chiefs and members of Six Nations, along with others.

"Whereas First Nations, Ontario, Canada and the world have a responsibility for the perpetual care and maintenance of our land and resources; and

"Whereas First Nations, Ontario, Canada and the world must work co-operatively to reduce greenhouse gas emissions resulting from power generation; and

"Whereas demand for clean electricity continues to grow; and

"Whereas our electricity demands are mostly reliant on fossil fuels, nuclear energy, and hydroelectric (water), all three will remain a part of the mix as we transition to renewable forms of electricity such as wind, solar, biomass and geothermal; and

"Whereas natural gas has the lowest greenhouse gas emissions of all the fossil fuels; and

"Whereas duly appointed leaders within the Haudenosaunee Six Nations confederacy, the Six Nations elected band council, the province of Ontario and the Ontario Power Authority support, in principle, the Eagles Nest power plant-power generation facility; and

"Whereas the proponents, Guswhenta Developments, have completed a Six Nations territory community-wide survey and received" vast "majority community support; and

"Whereas the Eagles Nest power plant establishes a template to explore further partnership opportunities toward the completion of new transmission lines and the restoration of existing lines within the Haldimand tract; and

"Whereas these initiatives and partnerships will provide an opportunity for the community of Six Nations to become energy self-sufficient over a 20-year period; and

"Whereas this power plant will assist in replacing the power from the soon-to-be-decommissioned Nanticoke coal-fired plant; and

"Whereas this native and non-native partnership will benefit the Six Nations, Brant and Ontario economy and will help to restore and enhance the goodwill and co-operation between these political entities;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, do hereby petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to issue a directive in respect to the Eagles Nest power plant-power generation facility and the historic partnership this project represents."

I hereby sign this petition and offer it to page Kerala.

ONTARIO BUDGET

Mr. Norm Miller: I have a petition, signed by people from Emsdale, Huntsville, Gravenhurst and Carney, to do with the budget. It reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the McGuinty government budget projects a spending explosion to \$109 billion in 2009-10; and

"Whereas much-needed tax cuts to help small and medium-sized businesses do not take effect until 2010...; and

"Whereas the McGuinty government has predicted it will increase the provincial debt by \$57 billion over the next seven years;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the McGuinty control government spending and reduce red tape; change the culture of government to help business comply with regulations, instead of its current approach of charging and fining businesses; and implement business tax cuts immediately."

I support this petition and affix my signature to it.

SCHOOL FACILITIES

Mr. Phil McNeely: A petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas St. Matthew Catholic High School is currently operating at 137% capacity and has been overcrowded for many years; and

"Whereas the Ottawa Catholic school board's capital plan identifies building an addition to St. Matthew Catholic High School as necessary (contingent on provincial grants) and planned for 2008; and

"Whereas the province of Ontario does not currently have a model to fund capital additions where school boards are not in debt and where these schools are in established communities and not part of the board's educational development charges bylaw;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To immediately transfer to the Ottawa Catholic school board the necessary funds to design and build the planned addition to St. Matthew Catholic High School in Orléans."

I will send this down with Brittany.

WORKPLACE INSURANCE

Mr. Ted Arnott: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and it reads as follows:

"Whereas the government of Ontario is introducing a policy of forcing sole proprietors, partners, executive officers in a corporation and independent operators in construction to pay workers' compensation premiums on their own earnings in addition to the premiums they already pay on behalf of their employees; and

"Whereas such a policy will inflict an additional \$11,000 average cost on law-abiding business owners in the above-ground economy while doing nothing to root out the law-evading cheaters in the underground economy; and

"Whereas such a policy will not improve access to workplace health and safety education and training since law-abiding businesses already have access to all of these resources and law-evading businesses will continue to hide; and

"Whereas such a policy is not needed to level the playing field, since the rules already require that firms large and small must cover employees, while company leaders are exempt in both cases; and

"Whereas there has been no serious review of alternatives such as tracking who has coverage by name to limit abuse and other insurance options; and

"Whereas such a policy could be extended beyond construction to other sectors; and

"Whereas Ontario's slowing economy is hurting citizens and businesses, also resulting in Ontario becoming a first-time 'have-not' province;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To vote against or repeal any legislation that requires independent operators, executive officers in a corporation, sole proprietors and partners in construction or in any other sector to pay WSIB premiums on their own earnings."

I support this petition and will affix my signature to it as well.

CHILD CUSTODY

Mr. Kim Craiton: I'm pleased to introduce this petition. I want to thank Mrs. Alexander for submitting a number of them to me. The petition reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"We, the people of Ontario, deserve and have the right to request an amendment to the Children's Law Reform Act to emphasize the importance of children's relationships with their parents and grandparents, as requested in Bill 33 ...

"Whereas subsection 20(2.1) requires parents and others with custody of children to refrain from unreasonably placing obstacles to personal relations between the children and their grandparents; and

"Whereas subsection 24(2) contains a list of matters that a court must consider when determining the best interests of a child. The bill amends that subsection to include a specific reference to the importance of maintaining emotional ties between children and grandparents; and

"Whereas subsection 24(2.1) requires a court that is considering custody of or access to a child to give effect to the principle that a child should have as much contact with each parent and grandparent as is consistent with the best interests of the child; and

"Whereas subsection 24(2.2) requires a court that is considering custody of a child to take into consideration each applicant's willingness to facilitate as much contact between the child and each parent and grandparent as is consistent with the best interests of the child;

"We, the undersigned, hereby petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to amend the Children's Law Reform Act to emphasize the importance of children's relationships with their parents and grandparents."

Thank you.

TAXATION

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty said he wouldn't raise taxes in the 2003 election, but in 2004 he brought in the health tax, the biggest tax hike in Ontario's history; and

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty will increase taxes yet again with his new 13% combined sales tax, at a time when families and businesses can least afford it; and

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty's new 13% sales tax will increase the cost of goods and services that families and businesses buy every day, such as: coffee, newspapers and magazines; gas at the pumps; home heating oil and electricity; postage stamps; haircuts; dry cleaning; home renovations; real estate transactions; veterinary care; arena ice and soccer field rentals;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Dalton McGuinty government wake up to Ontario's current economic reality and stop raising taxes, once and for all, on Ontario's hard-working families and businesses."

This is submitted to me by realtors in the riding of Oshawa, and I affix my name in support.

FIREARMS CONTROL

Mr. Mike Colle: I have a petition from the good people of Eglinton-Lawrence who are worried about gun crime.

"Whereas there are a growing number of drive-by shootings and gun crimes in our communities;

"Whereas only police officers ... and lawfully licensed persons are allowed to possess handguns;

"Whereas a growing number of illegal handguns are transported, smuggled" daily across our borders and "found in cars driven in our communities;

"Whereas impounding cars" with illegal guns "and suspending driver's licences" of the illegal gun carriers "on the spot by the police will make our communities safer;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to pass Bill 56, a bill proposed by MPP Mike Colle and entitled the Unlawful Firearms in Vehicles Act, 2008, into law so that we can reduce the number of drive-by shootings" and take these illegal guns off of our streets.

I support taking illegal guns off our streets and I support this petition. I affix my name to it.

1540

TAXATION

Mr. Bill Murdoch: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the residents of Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound do not want a provincial harmonized sales tax that will raise the cost of goods and services they use every day; and

"Whereas the 13% blended sales tax will cause everyone to pay more for gasoline for their cars, heat, telephone, cable and Internet services for their homes, and will be applied to house sales over \$400,000; and

"Whereas the 13% blended sales tax will cause everyone to pay more for meals under \$4, haircuts, funeral services, gym memberships, newspapers, and lawyer and accountant fees; and

"Whereas the blended sales tax grab will affect everyone in the province: seniors, students, families and low-income Ontarians;

"Therefore, we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the McGuinty Liberal government not increase taxes for Ontario consumers."

I have over 3,700 of these so far and more coming in.

ONTARIO BUDGET

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the McGuinty government understands the present-day economic realities facing Ontario;

"Whereas the 2009 Ontario budget reflects the need to create and maintain jobs by proposing to spend \$32.5 billion in the next two years to build more public transit and improve existing infrastructure, all the while supporting and creating 300,000 jobs;

"Whereas workers are further being helped by additional job opportunities created in the green energy sector via the ... Green Economy Act that will, if passed, create 50,000 new jobs in the first three years of its existence;

"Whereas Ontarians who work hard each and every day to make ends meet will receive much-needed income tax relief in the form of a 17% tax cut to the tax rate in Ontario's lowest tax bracket from the current 6.05% to 5.05%;

"Whereas Ontario's future, represented by her children, will receive the Ontario child benefit two full years ahead of schedule, amounting to \$1,100 per eligible child;

"We, the undersigned, therefore applaud the McGuinty government for introducing a budget that protects all Ontarians during these very difficult economic times by investing in our greatest resource—our people."

I agree with the petition and affix my signature to it.

MOTORCYCLE SAFETY

Mr. Robert Bailey: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Bill 117, presented by MPP Helena Jaczek on October 27, 2008, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act to prohibit the driving and operation of motorcycles with child passengers ...

"The Highway Traffic Act is amended by" the "following ... under 14 years old ...

"38.1 No person shall drive or operate a motorcycle on a highway if another person under the age of 14 years is a passenger ...;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That Bill 117 be removed from the agenda and never become law."

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Bob Delaney: I have a petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly and I want to thank Annick Ouellet, a chartered accountant with Sidler and Co., for having collected the signatures. It reads as follows:

"Whereas wait times for access to surgical procedures in the western GTA area served by the Mississauga Halton LHIN are growing despite the ongoing capital project activity at the hospitals within the Mississauga Halton LHIN boundaries; and

"Whereas 'day surgery' procedures could be performed in an off-site facility. An ambulatory surgery centre would greatly increase the ability of surgeons to perform more procedures, reduce wait times for patients and free up operating theatre space in hospitals for more complex procedures that may require post-operative intensive care unit support and a longer length of stay in hospital;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care allocate funds in its 2009-10 capital budget to begin planning and construction of an ambulatory surgery centre located in western Mississauga to serve the Mississauga-Halton area and enable greater access to 'day surgery' procedures that comprise about four fifths of all surgical procedures performed."

I'm pleased to sign and to support this petition and to ask page Alexander to carry it for me.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

BUDGET MEASURES ACT, 2009

LOI DE 2009 SUR LES MESURES BUDGÉTAIRES

Mr. Gravelle, on behalf of Mr. Duncan, moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 162, An Act respecting the budget measures and other matters / Projet de loi 162, Loi concernant les mesures budgétaires et d'autres questions.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Further debate?

Mr. Wayne Arthurs: I'm pleased to rise today to resume the debate on Bill 162, our Budget Measures Act, as we enter into third reading on this particular measure.

It is a particular pleasure, as we sit here, nearing the end of May, to be able to be doing this. This is a tradition, I would suggest, that this government has enacted during its time to move the budgetary cycle into presenting a budget before we reach the end of the fiscal year. Certainly, there have been times in the past when governments would be introducing their budgets in May. But here we are at the latter part of May, and we not only have had a budget that has been introduced by the finance minister and has had debate, but we have the budget measures bill and it has been to committee; and here we are, back for third reading at this point and ready, subject to the will of this Legislature, for its adoption. It's not groundbreaking in that sense, but it sets out a strategy whereby the people of the province of Ontario know, as early as can reasonably be assumed to be possible, what the objectives of the Legislature are.

Ontario, like other jurisdictions, is feeling the effects of this global economic crisis that we've been faced with. The economy degenerated in a substantive way during the summer of last year and into the fall. The finance minister spoke to this matter in his fall economic statement. We've continued to see that activity. I think that

there's a degree of optimism, as one looks at the marketplace out there, that things seem to be a little bit more stable in the investment climate, although that's not necessarily reflected in the current job environment. We don't know quite when and where all of this is going to land and when exactly we're going to be through what we're into today. The Premier has said on more than one occasion that this is the worst economic crisis that we've seen in some 80 years. It's a reflection of what leaders around the world have been saying: These are unprecedented times in which we find ourselves. So we've looked at options that were available to us, as a provincial government, within the context of this economic situation we find ourselves in.

I think it's important, though, to remind ourselves—because each budget, although it speaks to new initiatives and it speaks to currency in the context of what matters right now, today—of the tremendous investments that we've been making in this province, particularly during our time in government in these past five years.

We've made major investments in public health care, and I can see those in my own community. I've had the opportunity just recently, with the Minister of Health, the Honourable David Caplan, to see the redevelopment growth of our local hospital, the Ajax site of the Rouge Valley Health System, which has a major new development in the context of emergency and diagnostic capacity, something that has been so sorely needed for so long in the community that I represent. We're actually seeing the construction. That doesn't speak to this budget in the context of a new initiative, but it certainly speaks to this budget from the standpoint of the dollars that are available to continue this work and the preparation for its completion, as well as the need to operate facilities once they're built. Building is just one small part. The building part is often the easy part. It's recognizing the priorities and investing in those for the longer term.

At the same time, I had a chance, with the health minister, to join our family health team, the Durham West family health team. We started off in office under the former health minister, who initiated the family health team concept and put it out there, such that we put the first of those in place. At this point, Durham region only has one, and it's the Durham West health team. We met with those people, who have been working so diligently over the past two years, building the health team and bringing together the professionals. It was really encouraging as we sat and listened to the health professionals speak of their excitement at working in that type of environment and about the learning that they'll be able to achieve on a day-by-day basis—physicians who are no longer working in the context of their own little offices but are sharing with their peers in a health facility about the work that's being done by health practitioners and by the support staff. These are the very kinds of investments we have been making in health care over the past five years, not just in this particular budget.

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We're making major investments in our education system, everything from smaller class sizes through to

the investments in our post-secondary institutions and concluding postgraduate work. Those include enormous investments in infrastructure.

I want to speak briefly—this is another opportunity—about those investments. Just as recently as this week, there are members throughout this Legislature who have had the opportunity to see within their communities the commitment to investments, much of it ours but not all our own. We have to have partners in this regard, and to a large extent our federal partners are participating in this.

I had the opportunity yesterday, at the University of Toronto Scarborough, to make an announcement of \$70 million—\$35 million of that from the province of Ontario—for a new learning facility on that site: classrooms, laboratory commitments, space for their very significant co-op program. They are the centre for their very significant co-op program. They are the centre for their very significant co-op program. They are the centre for their very significant co-op program. It will be the largest single building structure on that site in Scarborough since 1965.

It's this type of a budget, this stimulus budget that allows us, with our partners, to be able to make these types of commitments, not only in ridings like mine but in ridings across this province. There's more to that yet to follow. We're at the very early stages, as we begin to identify, through the applications that are made, those projects that are referred to as "shovel-ready," those that will see construction on those sites within a matter of days and weeks, in which there will be men and women working on those sites, taking home a paycheck that they might not otherwise have been taking home if there hadn't been those construction projects. Those projects will come to completion. There will be staff hired to operate those projects.

There will be, in the universities, professors; in those health clinics, the health teams; there will be health practitioners in those hospitals; there will be doctors and nurses working for a career, a lifetime of work, keeping us healthy, making sure we retain our health or teaching our children and our grandchildren what they need to know, developing in them the skills that will continue to retain Ontario as one of the greatest places in the world to live.

In order for Ontarians to have the type of public services that they are owed, that we deserve to give them as a government—that really is our role to the greatest extent, providing quality public service to the public that we serve—we expect that we have to look at things differently. And right now we are looking at things, I would suggest, very, very differently. We have to say to ourselves, how are we going to keep up with the rate of growth in health care expenditures? They're not slowing down. I would suggest that in this budget and probably in subsequent budgets there will be continuing efforts to slow the rate of growth, the curve of growth, so that we will still have funding available for all those other crucial elements of our communities. We have to look at the rate of growth within health care as an example.

We have to understand how we're going to be able to continue to make the post-secondary education invest-

ments so that they are available, so post-secondary education is available to all Ontarians of all ages once they are at that point in their life.

How are we going to make this a greener economy? How are we going to turn that corner and ensure that the next generation understands the need for and the opportunities that can be there for a green economy? It wasn't very long ago that very few in this room would have been talking about a green economy. We were talking about the environment and we were talking about the greening of the environment; we might have been talking about the greening of our cities. But the idea of a green economy—not just some green jobs—would have been foreign to us at that point in time, and now we find ourselves in the situation where we are openly and actively looking at our capacity within our budgetary context to build a green economy, to support those who will help develop that economy.

I spoke earlier about the eagerness we had to bring a budget in at an early stage, to set the stage for a fiscal and a calendar year as well. The Minister of Finance, on March 26, actually presented the budget in this place. It really has a two-stage approach to what we're doing. We are taking very immediate action to make Ontario more competitive with a short-term investment of some \$34 billion, including \$32.5 billion of that for infrastructure—in roads, in sewers, in bridges, in schools and in hospitals. As we drive down some of our highways and take a look as we travel, whether it's the 400-series highways, the TransCanada Highway or the secondary highways, to see as an example that so many Ontarians can see, the very investments that are being made in the infrastructure of this province at an accelerated rate from what we were seeing not so long ago.

My friend in Oshawa, who spoke earlier in the form of a petition, was talking about a sales tax. I know when he drives home along the 401 through Oshawa, he sees the redevelopment going on at Stevenson Road and an interchange that was planned for 50 years or talked about for 50 years that only came to fruition with our government. Now, it wasn't that others didn't have the opportunity. They chose not to make that the priority. I know that the member from Oshawa is so very pleased to see that happening in his community.

I had the opportunity to be driving along the TransCanada Highway, north of Napanee in the Belleville area, just during the past 10 days or so, and I know those members who use that route to travel to eastern Ontario, when they get off the 401, see the new construction going on between Highway 37 north of Belleville and easterly toward Highway 41, although not all the way through, and they see the major changes being made to Highway 7 and the safety that it's going to bring along that roadway. I've driven that roadway many, many times, and the truck traffic there is pretty substantive. When you take a look at the turns and the corners, and it drops off into the swamplands and the rock on one side, this is going to be not only a major improvement for the use of that roadway but a significant improvement for truck traffic and for the safety of all those using that roadway.

We need to make these investments. It's why we're committing to a very significant, short-term investment of some \$34 billion, almost all of which is focused on infrastructure. It really is part of a major stimulus at a time when we have such an economic decline, and we have to do all things possible and reasonable to invest wisely and invest in what is going to build on the long term of this province, and at the same time continue to make the wheels of the economy turn in the best way that we can.

As part of achieving all of this, we've announced a comprehensive tax reform package that, when fully implemented, will promote increased foreign and domestic investment and productivity here in Ontario. I know there are those across the floor from us who would like to speak about one element of that, and they like to raise these days in petitions and talk about our single-sales-tax initiatives. They like to frame it in a different way, not a totally clear way in any fashion. They're talking now about a 13% McGuinty tax. The reality is, for the vast majority of products that we buy we are all, each of us, already paying a GST and a PST, and those together are 13%. So for the vast majority of products and things that we already deal with, that's a tax we all pay within the context of living in this province.

There will be some elements that will change as a result of the harmonization of that, but it's so—do you know the key thing I've been hearing over the past number of months from my public? What we really have to look at is what the public expects of us, what they expect of us. One of the key elements they expect, and we've been hearing it time and time again: They speak to us about the need for governments to work together; they speak about the need for us here provincially, federally and municipally to work together. They don't want to hear about why one party's not doing one thing and another government's not doing other things: "Can't you guys just get over that? Can't you figure out a way to work together?" When you take a look at what our public expects broadly across the province and what they expect of governments, then you take the kinds of decisive actions in a comprehensive way to make that happen.

There will be little pieces of it that individuals won't like. If it's always about me, I'll find something that I don't like. But if it's about us in this place, us in this province, then you look forward. In doing that, we're looking at a comprehensive tax reform package. It wasn't that long ago that we initiated a harmonization of the collection of corporate tax, and that was so the corporations weren't submitting two sets of tax forms, weren't submitting tax forms to the provincial government and tax forms to the federal government in different sets of rules and regulations, in different sets of auditors, in different sets of returns, and going back and having to divide stuff all out to get it all right.

Now we're taking another very significant step. We're taking what we did with the federal government in the context of the harmonization of the corporate tax structure and we're moving that into the smaller business

and the consumer side of taxes. We're going to bring the tax structure together so that when you get your bill when you're out purchasing goods and services, you're going to get a single bill with a single tax number on it. As a small business or a business of any sort, when you're submitting your taxation, you're going to submit it to one entity, you're going to submit it under one set of rules, you're going to have one set of potential audits going on, and you're going to respond to one set of questions from one government. The government, in this case, that's going to act on our behalf, on behalf of Ontarians, is going to be the federal government. We'll work with them to ensure that they return to us the dollars that are collected as part of the provincial stream of that tax flow.

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Mr. Dave Levac: That's practical.

Mr. Wayne Arthurs: Right. The member for Brant says that that's just simply practical. It's practical, it's reasonable, and it's in a fashion whereby the public will know what's expected of them in the context of not getting a bill and saying, "Does this one have PST or GST?"

Now, I'm not sure when I buy something, because I never look really all that closely at those numbers, whether there may be some place, when I pick up a bill, that the retailer may not know and may have applied PST to something that wouldn't otherwise have it applicable. Or they may have applied GST to a PST item that they might not have otherwise known was applicable, because the rules are so confused. So this is going to be a much more straightforward, straight-up, easy-to-understand structure.

In doing that, we're also going to be doing some things that the business community has been calling on us consistently to do. We've made some very significant changes already. We've made changes on things like the business education tax to make it fair for businesses across the province of Ontario, and those measures are being phased in. They were part of an earlier budget. Even as recently as last year, we accelerated that in northern Ontario, recognizing the special needs that are there.

But we're going to be taking some further measures. We're now going to be moving forward on reductions in corporate tax. Over the next few years, the corporate tax in the province of Ontario will be reduced to some 10%. We've already taken initiatives on that in regard to manufacturing and the natural resources sectors, which we see being the hardest hit by the economy and the ones that need the most urgent and direct attention.

In doing all those things, we also want to be cognizant of what the needs of individual Ontarians are. Our priorities remain very much the same. Our priorities remain ensuring that we have a health system available to Ontarians. Our priorities remain that we have an education system that provides for young people the kind of learning environment and support that they need, that they have the opportunity to grow an education throughout their lives.

But there are those in our community who find themselves more vulnerable, who find that they don't have the advantages that others might have, and we have consistently, on this side of the House, worked toward strategies whereby we would improve the lot of those who are more vulnerable. Now, I will admit, as we will hear from other speakers, I am sure, that we haven't yet done enough, that there is more to do, that each year there will be more for us to do. But in this particular budget, specifically, we have increased the amount of Ontario Works for those who find themselves not able to be in the workplace. It's a modest 2%. And we have increased the amount of Ontario disability support payment for those who find themselves unable to be in the workplace. It's a modest 2%.

We have taken the first-ever Ontario child benefit in this province and we have accelerated its implementation by a full two years, so that as of July of this year, it will be fully implemented, up to \$1,100 per child, in those families where they find they have difficulty providing the type of quality of life that you or I in this House might be able to provide for our children. This was a major move of our government at the end of the last mandate to introduce the Ontario child benefit. It was being phased in, but we've seen the need to accelerate that and have used this budget as that opportunity, because of the economic situation we find ourselves in, to move that forward in a very expeditious fashion.

We continue to follow through on commitments to those who are in the workplace. We have had, I believe, six increases to the minimum wage since coming to office in 2003. It now stands at \$9.50. And scheduled for March 31, 2010: to achieve the goal we set out of \$10.25 for the minimum wage.

That in and of itself would probably cause debate in this House. We'd have those on one side opposite us who would say that's not enough, and those on the other side opposite us who would argue that it's too hard on small business, and thus the challenge of finding the right balance in doing a budget, the right balance in government in providing for the needs of those who have the greatest need, to protect and ensure that our business climate in this province is as competitive as it can be, and to ensure, as we work our way through this recessionary period and come out of it, that we're not standing still, that we're not treading water; that we are leaders, not only in Ontario—obviously leaders in Canada—but leaders in the world in attracting industry, in growing industry and ensuring that we have young people who are ready for those challenges: ready for a new green economy and ready for what this economy will look like. This budget is directed to that. It's a two-phase budget: one to deal with the reality and initiatives that we have before us today in short-term investments, as well as protecting those who are vulnerable in our community; and planning for our future to ensure we are a competitive jurisdiction and that we have the right balance.

I appreciate the opportunity that's been presented to me this afternoon. I very much enjoyed working through

this budgetary process and hope that when the vote is called on this, as early as tomorrow, all members of the Legislature will feel so inclined to stand in their place in support of the 2009 provincial budget.

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Point of order, the member for Carleton–Mississippi Mills.

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: Mr. Speaker, is this the budget debate or is this a debate on Bill 162?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Debate on Bill 162, the budget bill, and thank you very much.

Further debate? I recognize again the member for Carleton–Mississippi Mills.

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: It's amazing how the parliamentary assistant to the finance minister can get up and speak for 20 minutes and not mention one sentence about the matter we're discussing, Bill 162. Bill 162 contains 31 different pieces of legislation, and the parliamentary assistant didn't mention one. He mentioned all this hokey-pokey stuff about the budget, what a wonderful budget it was and all the rest of it. Well, how can the people of Ontario get a picture of what this government is about when they stand up and don't even talk about the business of the day? The business of the day is Bill 162, 31 different pieces of legislation. The parliamentary assistant doesn't even mention one.

He talks about the McGuinty sales tax, the combined sales tax—not even in this bill. There's nothing in this bill which this member, this parliamentary assistant to the finance minister, mentioned in his speech. He talked about the big funds that they're putting forward towards infrastructure, of course not mentioning the fact that we're borrowing all the money to do this, that they're not paying that out of their current revenues and that it's going to be our children and our grandchildren who pay the bills on this. But notwithstanding that, not one word about Bill 162.

I want to talk about Bill 162 because it's an important piece of legislation. It's an important piece of legislation because it gives the finance minister unbelievable power to write cheques without consulting with anyone. This bill gives that minister, the finance minister, the right to write a cheque—and this cheque is going to be not for \$1 million, not for \$100 million; this cheque is going to be probably for \$2.5 billion, because that's what he's given himself space for, in terms of the documents which he has filed with this Legislative Assembly, in terms of the estimate book. He's given himself an interim fund—or a slush fund if you want to call it—of \$3.4 billion. Whereas normally the government gives itself space of about half a billion dollars, this finance minister has given himself a space of \$3.4 billion. What we're doing in this act is saying that he can write a cheque unilaterally—or not write a cheque—to the pension benefits guarantee fund for any amount that he decides in his head that he wants to do. He doesn't have to come back to the Legislature. He doesn't have to file supplementary estimates so that the members of the estimates committee will have an opportunity to cross-examine him on it. He

can do that unilaterally, and that we find extremely difficult to support. In fact, we won't support it and we won't be supporting the bill, primarily because of this one act out of the 31 acts.

I want to make it clear, as I did in my speech on second reading of this particular bill, that we support 28 of the 31 acts.

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One of the acts which the government put forward under schedule 13, the Government Advertising Act: This Government Advertising Act, which was brought in by this government before, put a great onus on the Auditor General to vet advertisements by ministers before they put them out, in terms of TV ads, circulars, mailouts and all those kinds of things. When we first saw schedule 13 of this, the Government Advertising Act, we thought it was an improvement. But guess what? When we got to committee, the government had decided that they were going to wipe it off the map. They were not going to include an amendment to the Government Advertising Act. When I questioned the minister one day in this Legislature about why this happened, why they are pulling back from this particular act, he mentioned consultations with the Auditor General. Then, in the committee that we had, albeit a very brief committee—one day of public hearings and a short period of time in clause-by-clause—I asked the parliamentary secretary, “Why did you pull this out? What are these consultations with the Auditor General?” The only conclusion that I can come to is that the Auditor General saw this as taking his powers to vet ads away from him and that the accountability was getting worse, not better, under this amendment to this legislation.

Mr. John Yakabuski: They tried to pull a fast one.

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: They tried to pull a fast one, but the Auditor General got them. He said, “Take this out,” or something. I don't know what he said. But obviously the government doesn't do this very often. They certainly don't take pieces out of their legislation when the opposition shows the fallacies of them. So that's one piece of this legislation we're very, very concerned about.

Also, we should talk about, so that people who might be watching this debate on Bill 162—because they wouldn't have gotten any clue about what Bill 162 is about from the government side of the benches, because they were just talking about the budget and should have had that speech in the budget debate. Under schedule 29, the government wants to give the teachers' pension board the right to manage other pension funds for other groups in the province of Ontario. Our caucus agrees with that. We believe that the teachers' pension board has done a pretty good job of handling the teachers' pension fund, and we thought that was a fair thing to do. However, what this government forgot to do was consult with the other largest pension fund in the province of Ontario. I'm talking about OMERS, the Ontario municipal employment retirement system. They forgot about them totally. So the people from OMERS came in and spoke to our

committee, and thankfully the government saw fit to accept my amendment and put OMERS in the same position as the teachers' pension plan, because OMERS has had a very good record of investment even during this period of time when we've had a lot of upset in the markets.

The reason I want to say that the government accepted my amendment was because my amendment was the same as their amendment—

Mr. Michael Prue: And the same as our amendment.

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: And the same as the New Democratic Party amendment. But because I've been around here for a few years, I was smart enough to file mine at 9 o'clock and the other guys were late at five after 9, so they accepted my amendment.

Mr. John Yakabuski: The early bird gets the worm, Norm.

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: The early bird gets the worm. That's exactly right. So they should learn, as they go along, that if they're dealing with an old vet like me, they'd better be careful.

Interjection.

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: Yeah, they'd love to have me out of here, Mr. Speaker. They'd love to have me out of here.

I want to thank Michael Nobrega, chief executive officer of OMERS, for bringing this to our attention, the NDP's attention and of course the government's attention. I was informed of that by my good friend David Angus of Capital Hill Group in Ottawa, who represents them.

Unfortunately, that spirit of co-operation that they extended to me on that amendment didn't extend to the other amendments that we put forward on that bill. I put forward this amendment, and I was supported by the New Democratic Party on it. We wanted the Minister of Finance to have more accountability when he writes that huge, big cheque which I believe will be over \$2 billion. I would like some other people involved in that decision, even if it is the cabinet of Ontario. He doesn't even have to go to the cabinet of Ontario to write that cheque. All he has to do is say, “I want to write the cheque. I've been given the power in the legislation to do so, and therefore, so be it.”

What I wanted was not only for the cabinet to be involved; I wanted the Legislative Assembly to be involved as well so that we could have a debate in this place about where that money was going. Is it going only to GM employees? Is it going to cover Nortel employees who are also supposed to be benefactors of the pension guarantee fund? I have many Nortel employees who live in the area that I represent, and I feel that if some of the people are going to be helped out here, then all of the people who should benefit from this particular pension fund guarantee should be helped out.

So we put forward amendments to have a debate about it, to have the cabinet involved in the decision. They were voted down. As my friend says, they talk about having accountability. Really, this particular act is about running away from accountability.

The other part of this legislation I want to talk about is schedule 27 of the bill, which deals with the interim appropriation bill for this government. As members know, in order for the government to be able to write the cheques out of the consolidated revenue fund to satisfy their budget and then their spending, they have to come to the Legislative Assembly for permission to do that, and that goes back a long, long way with regard to the accountability of the government to the legislative chamber.

Now, normally what happens is that the government comes usually a month before it needs to start spending this money, start writing the cheques. This government did kind of a sneaky thing back in October when they brought forward their first interim allocation bill for this financial year, which started in April. In October, they started to get permission to spend money on April 1. At that time, they came forward and asked for the right to write cheques for about \$50 billion—\$54 billion I think it was. In this bill, where we have 31 different acts, we find tucked in this bill another interim allocation bill for another blast of dough, another \$50 billion.

So here we are passing on third reading, two months into the financial year, the right to spend and write cheques for \$104 billion out of \$108 billion that they're projecting to spend over this total financial year. That means that they could close this place up and prorogue next week, on June 4, and not even come back here until March of next year. They could do that, by the fact that they've gone so early in terms of seeking this permission to write the cheques—

Mr. John Yakabuski: And we can't stop them.

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Mr. Norman W. Sterling: And we can't stop them. They can write the cheques, and write the cheques, and write the cheques until well into the next calendar year, into the 10th or 11th month of the fiscal year. I have never seen this before, where they have come so early in the financial year and asked for enough authority to spend money throughout the whole year. So it makes you a little bit suspicious of where they're going and what they're going to do in the coming months as we close down the Parliament.

There's some good legislation in here as well, and as I said on second reading, we support it. We support the amendments to the Taxation Act to give children in the care of children's aid societies the Ontario child benefit. We absolutely support that. These children should receive the same benefits as other Ontario children, and I believe that children's aid societies will then be put in a position to help out foster kids as parents can help out their own children who receive these kinds of benefits.

We support the changes to the Tobacco Tax Act. We obviously support restricting the progression of unmarked cigarettes.

Interjection.

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: But we have to point out, as the public accounts committee has pointed out, you've got to have somebody to enforce those laws, as my friend from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound says.

Now, while I don't particularly like a freeze on my salary, we do agree that at this time it is an appropriate thing to do. We only think—or would like to have a little bit of a debate about the fact that perhaps all of those people who are receiving the same kind of compensation as MPPs and other public servants should also accept freezes as well, so that people who are struggling in our economy can benefit to a greater extent than those of us who are fortunate enough to have the kind of compensation packages that we presently do have.

I've outlined and talked about Bill 162, which I think we were supposed to do this afternoon. We oppose the pension reform bill that gives unilateral authority to the finance minister to either write or not write a cheque. It's dangerous to give one man that kind of unilateral power and not have him accountable, either to his cabinet or to this Legislative Assembly. We also oppose this second interim allocation bill that gives the government of the day just an unbelievable free hand at spending right to the end of the financial year, which will end on March 31, 2010.

I'm also very concerned with regard to the government's withdrawal of amendments to the advertising bill. I would love to have the Auditor General and the finance minister explain to us where the conflicts arose, and why, in fact, the Auditor General saw this as a diminution of his powers under the present Government Advertising Act.

With that, even though we are supporting 28 of the 30 acts that are going to be called for third reading, because of the grave nature of the pension reform act and the interim allocation bill, we will be forced to vote against this bill, notwithstanding that we do support those 28 other bills that are contained in this omnibus piece of legislation. Thank you very much.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Michael Prue: I have now had an opportunity to listen to both my esteemed colleagues, starting first with the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Finance and then my esteemed colleague Mr. Sterling, Carleton-Mississippi Mills.

I think my colleague from Carleton-Mississippi Mills hit it right when he said that the parliamentary assistant did not deal with any of the substance of Bill 162. Of course, the tradition of this Legislature is that you do not have to, but what he did spend his time on was talking about the billions of dollars of money that is going to be spent on infrastructure, in this province and across Canada, all of the parliamentary and municipal jurisdictions of this country.

I suppose that we should be thankful that money is going to be spent on infrastructure—on the roads, the sewers, the bridges and all of the things that have been neglected for only too long. I think that when he talks about what people will remember in terms of this budget, he is hoping that that is what they are going to remember, but I will tell him that is not what is going to be remembered in this budget or in Bill 162.

This budget will be remembered for many, many years following what's going to happen next July, and that's going to be the imposition of the hated HST—or as some members of the Legislature like to call it, the blended sales tax or BST. That is what is going to be remembered. That is really what is going to be remembered. Don't anybody on the government benches think it's going to the largesse, the spending of money and how many infrastructure projects are built in your community—what is going to happen is that people are going to remember this as the budget that brought in an HST.

The second thing that's going to be remembered, particularly for those people who are of pensionable age or who are going to soon become of pensionable age, is probably much more germane to this bill, and that is the washing of the hands of this government on the pension guarantee fund. I think I was the first one to speak in the Legislature, looking through Bill 162 hurriedly as it was passed across to see what was contained within the body of the bill, and spoke because there was the opportunity for the minister to put money in, for the minister not to put money in, for the minister to do something about the pension guarantee fund, for the minister to do nothing about the pension guarantee fund. As the weeks have gone by since the introduction of Bill 162, and we're now closing in on the end of third reading, it's become increasingly clear to everyone who is out there what the true intent of this government is.

Now, had they made a mistake and had they been willing to fix it, we would have been more than happy to provide some assistance. I was unable to attend the last committee meeting of the finance committee, and my esteemed colleague the member from Timmins—James Bay substituted for me. He put forward the motion that we wanted to put forward, and I just want to read it into the record and explain what it would have done.

Mr. Gilles Bisson moved that “subsection 1(3) of schedule 24 to the bill be struck out and the following substituted:”—and it goes on—I'm just going to skip down out of the legalese:

“(4) If at any time the amount standing to the credit of the guarantee fund is insufficient for the purpose of paying claims, the Lieutenant Governor in Council shall authorize the Minister of Finance,

“(a) to make loans out of the consolidated revenue fund to the guarantee fund on such terms and conditions as the Lieutenant Governor in Council directs;

“(b) to make a grant to the guarantee fund out of money appropriated for that purpose by the Legislature; or

“(c) to make both loans under clause (a) and a grant under clause (b).”

Mr. Bisson went on to explain what that would do. Quite literally, what that would do is give authority to the Lieutenant Governor in Council, i.e., the cabinet, to make the necessary loans and/or grants to the consolidated pension guarantee fund so that they didn't go broke. We know quite literally that there are hundreds of pensions in this province that are at risk. They are at risk through no

fault of their own but because the stock market collapsed last year; they are at risk through no fault of their own but quite simply because the pension guarantee fund has not been kept up to date in the way that it should have been kept up to date for the last 20 years. I will tell you, it was the last 20 years, and they were mostly—not all, but mostly—good times, and there would have been an opportunity to have done something about that, but nothing was done.

1630

I know that my own caucus spoke about this. I spoke about it, and Andrea Horwath, my colleague from Hamilton Centre, spoke about it when the pension portfolio was her own. My colleague from Hamilton East—Stoney Creek has stood up many times to talk about the consolidated pension fund, but to no avail.

Now we have here a section in Bill 162 that allows the government not to do anything, and I think that's the real shame about what is going on here today. The government members had an opportunity and chose not to speak about this, but it must be spoken to.

People are out there who are at very real risk of not having the pensions into which they have paid during their entire working lives. They're at very real risk, without that pension money and the monies available to them that would have been given by the pension guarantee consolidated fund, of finding themselves impecunious, of finding themselves, in their older age, not having the monies and the funds upon which they had relied and which they had counted on and to which they were entitled. I think that's what needs to be talked to. It's one of the reasons that New Democrats cannot support this bill. It's not because of the whole budget; it's because of Bill 162 and what it does.

As my colleague the member from Carleton—Mississippi Mills said, there are 32 applications here, but this, to my mind, is the most serious. The government appears to want to gloss over it, appears not to want to talk about it, appears to pretend that nothing is going to happen, appears to say that this is all some kind of—that it will be looked after.

I don't have his whole statement here, but I do have the part in which Mr. Arthurs—and it's reported as “Mr. Wayne Arthurs” in the Legislative Assembly of Ontario committees, after Mr. Bisson put in this motion. Mr. Wayne Arthurs, as the parliamentary assistant, made the following part of his statement. It says:

“Mr. Chairman, the government side won't be supporting the amendment. We think that the legislation as presented provides the right balance, with some flexibility for the Lieutenant Governor in Council to authorize a grant, if that be the case.” He went on to explain that the government would not be looking after all of those people who desperately need some kind of guarantee and stability in their pensions.

I just wanted to raise this issue and say that we, as New Democrats, tried to protect the pensioners out there. We tried to protect the people who have put their entire life savings into pensions. The government wants nothing

to do with it. They want to be remembered for spending federal monies. They want to be remembered for building infrastructure. They want to be remembered for a huge, whopping \$14-billion deficit and how the money is going to be spent. But I think the people of Ontario will remember them for two things. One is the imposition of the HST, which will come to full flower next July. The second one is the washing of their hands of the pension guarantee fund.

Those are the comments I wish to make today. I'm going to leave it to my esteemed colleague the member from Nickel Belt, who has a great deal she wishes to talk about in terms of the budget and the budget process.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I go in rotation. Further debate?

M^{me} France Gélinas: Last Friday, May 22, I held a community forum to give the people of Sudbury a chance to comment on the budget and Bill 162, because some of them—I would say, most of them—did not find that the one-day consultation held in Toronto was very convenient for them to be heard. Most of the people of Sudbury did not have a chance to be heard, so I offered them the community forum, and they came. What you will hear this afternoon is what they had to say.

The first ones to present were Mrs. Rachelle Lacoste and Susan Nicholson. Both of them are from the Child and Family Centre in Sudbury. They started by explaining that one in five children is in need of mental health services. In the last 15 years, they had only seen an increase to their budget twice, which left them with a great deficit, which meant that they had to close the residential program that we used to have. After they closed it, they started using the program at Roberts/Smart. But we all know what's happening to their program. It was raised in this House that they are also closing their residential program. This means that not only will kids from Sudbury not have access to a residential program anymore if they need to, they need to be shipped out of their community. Now Roberts/Smart, which was one of the only ones to offer French-language services to the francophone kids of Sudbury, is also closing. That makes for hard times.

She talked about having to lay off 21 staff because of the closing of the program and the hard time that they are having. They're presently struggling with about a \$300,000 deficit. So because they don't want to lose their trained staff, what they have done is basically balanced the books by not replacing vacancies and by reintroducing what people in this House will recognize as Rae days, so that staff takes time without pay to help their employers balance the books, because they understand how important children's mental health is.

Those people are very knowledgeable. They knew about the roots of violence report and the increase of delinquency that happens when you don't have the proper mental health for children. They knew about the Fraser Mustard report and the importance of attachment in early childhood development if you want a healthy society, and they also participated in the Kids Matter campaign.

Unfortunately, there is no money in the budget for children's mental health, which means that the deplorable situation they came to me with is not about to change unless the government changes their mind and listens to the people from the Child and Family Centre of Sudbury.

The second group that came was Mrs. Denise Lafond and Paul Corsi. They are the executive director and the president of the Sudbury and District Home Builders Association. They wanted to talk to me and make sure that I brought a very clear message back to Queen's Park about the devastating effects the HST is going to have on their industry and on their members.

They can predict—and they have it well-documented—the devastating effect of the HST on home building in Sudbury and in Ontario, as well as for renovation. They talked about how last year on May 22 there were 72 new houses started up in Sudbury; this year it's down to 19.

Then they went through the process of people who are building a house: from the architect's fees that are going to go up 8%, the engineering fees going up 8%, the lawyer's fees going up 8%—and then, of course, they told me that 60% of the price of building a new home is labour, and this is also going to go up 8%. They find that this is the wrong tax at the wrong time.

They're also concerned about the full effect of the HST—or BST, whatever you want to call it—on buying a secondary residence. A lot of people in the north will have a camp which will be considered a secondary residence. And they're worried about renovation.

But basically what they showed is that 48% of the home construction in Sudbury is from private owners, those most at risk of going to the underground market. With this new tax, they know full well that people will go to the underground market more and more, which means that the legitimate tax revenue that should have been coming to the province will decrease even more. Not a pretty picture.

The next one actually presented in French, so I will present her comments in French. La prochaine qui a présenté, c'était M^{me} France Jodoin. Elle est la directrice de La Bouquinerie du Moulin, qui aura son ouverture jeudi matin. Donc, pour ceux qui nous écoutent, si vous êtes disponibles à 10 heures jeudi matin à Sudbury, c'est l'ouverture de La Bouquinerie du Moulin. Elle est une employée du Centre FORA, un centre qui fait de la formation de base ou de l'alphabétisation.

Elle a démontré l'importance de l'alphabétisation, de la formation de base. Parce qu'il n'y a pas de financement stable dans le budget pour aider les organismes qui font de la formation de base, il y a des conséquences sociales très importantes en ce moment avec toutes les mises à pied qui ont eu lieu à Sudbury. Les travailleurs qui n'ont même pas la formation de base se retrouvent en bien mauvaise posture, et son organisme aurait voulu voir un investissement par le gouvernement dans la formation de base. Malheureusement, ça non plus n'est pas là.

1640

The next presenter—I have very many in very few minutes—was Mr. John Closs, who is from the Sudbury

and District Labour Council, which represents about 15,000 workers in Sudbury. The labour council was asking to maintain the current and planned spending by the government on social services because our community has seen 700 layoffs at Xstrata nickel and all of the 4,000 workers at Vale Inco are presently on a production layoff for two months. This is having a tremendous effect on the demand for social services.

They also wanted to see funding in the budget for child care because child care is a work issue that is recognized by the Sudbury labour council. But here again there was no money in there for them. They would have liked to see a worker centre linked up with legal aid and funding for that centre in Sudbury, which is something that has been in the works for a long time.

They also asked for changes to Second Career because this program is too complicated and too hard for workers to gain access to, and they don't want it to be limited to high schools and colleges; it should include university training.

Going really fast, the next one was Kate Barber. She was from Lansdowne Public School. She talked about precarious living conditions and the effect that has on kids. She gave an example of a child who moved two and sometimes three times during the school year, which means a completely different curriculum from one school to the next, which means reorganizing transportation, child care etc. because the living conditions are so precarious and they are not able to get onto social housing because of the long waiting list. They would have liked to have seen more money in the budget for social housing so that situations like this do not happen.

Another presenter who proposed a recommendation—basically, she was the victim of a motor vehicle accident, and she came to talk about the proposal by financial services to decrease the lifetime amount from \$100,000 to \$25,000. She was very opposed to this and took her opportunity to talk to me about this.

The next person who came and talked was Naureen McChesney. Naureen is from Best Start, a program that supports child care services in Sudbury. She talked about the lack of funding in the budget for child care and for the new hubs that have been developing in and around Sudbury. She talked about the need to pay child care workers a decent wage that brings them above the poverty wage and that recognizes the important work those people do. Again, she would like modification to the budget so that those complaints can be taken into account.

Then came Mr. Claude Berthiaume. Claude Berthiaume is a councillor with the city of Greater Sudbury. He talked about the need for funding to the municipality. He certainly recognized that there has been some uploading of services that had to be paid by the municipality that are now being picked up by the province, but he complained about the cuts to OMPF, which is the Ontario municipal partnership fund. As the programs are being uploaded, so is the money that they used to get to pay for those programs.

He talked about the 90 members of FONOM, the Federation of Northern Ontario Municipalities, who have asked for an increase in the northern and rural fund. They would like this fund to be increased by \$15 per resident. All 90 of them have made requests to this government, but they have not received any answer back to their proposition, and they didn't see anything in the budget either to lead them to believe that this would be acted upon.

They would also liked to have seen funding for a northern Ontario school of architecture, which is a program that the city of Greater Sudbury has been working on for a long time.

They talked about affordable housing. The waiting list for affordable housing in Sudbury is extremely long.

I'm running out of time.

There were many people who wanted to be heard and clearly said that one day of public hearings in Toronto means that this government is not interested in hearing from people from Sudbury, because it was impossible for them to be heard. I was happy to be able to bring some of their comments here this afternoon.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. John O'Toole: I have three points that I want to make very quickly. First, this government will go down with Bill 162 with three important, I would say, anchors—or at least they'll be dragging on their growth. One is the HST, which is a 13% tax on many items that currently aren't taxed at that rate. The second one, of course, would be the whole debate around pensions. There's an expert panel out there now, and people should pay attention; there's a lot going on in that file. Also, the opposition under Bob Runciman should feel very, very confident that the whole of schedule 13 has been removed from the bill. This was the advertising, where they're trying to get around the rules of disclosure in terms of government advertising and third party advertising—the Working Families Coalition—during election time. Those contributions are now a centrepiece that this government shouldn't be proud of at all.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes the time allocated for this debate.

Pursuant to the order of the House dated April 21, 2009, I am now required to put the question. Mr. Gravelle has moved third reading of Bill 162, An Act respecting the budget measures and other matters. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 10-minute bell.

I wish to inform the House that I have received a deferral notice pursuant to standing order 28(h). The chief government whip is requesting a deferral of the vote until tomorrow at the time of deferred votes after question period.

Third reading vote deferred.

EDUCATION AMENDMENT ACT
(KEEPING OUR KIDS SAFE
AT SCHOOL), 2009
LOI DE 2009 MODIFIANT
LA LOI SUR L'ÉDUCATION
(SÉCURITÉ DE NOS ENFANTS
À L'ÉCOLE)

Resuming the debate adjourned on May 14, 2009, on the motion for third reading of Bill 157, An Act to amend the Education Act.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate? I recognize the member for Burlington. No? I apologize; I need the advice of the table.

I am advised by the table that it is the turn of the New Democrats to lead off with their debate. The member for Trinity-Spadina.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: It is—
Interjections.

Hon. Jim Watson: Go get 'em, Rosie. Stand up.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I will, Jim—and you don't have to be that big to be able to go after Liberals. You can be small, medium-sized, big, tall, fat, not fat; anything will do. As long as you've got a voice to go after the Liberals, it's a good day.

I welcome the citizens of Ontario. We are on live. It's almost 5 o'clock. And what day is it today? It's Tuesday.

I want to talk about the bill, Keeping Our Kids Safe at School, because I had a whole hour on second reading to say, "My God, we're spending"—

Interjections.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: No, no, this is a debate with Liberals. They already know what I'm going to say.

Interjections.

1650

Mr. Rosario Marchese: They're so loud.

Mr. Mike Colle: Only Liberals will listen to you.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: That's because we have a mutual understanding; right? And you love to hear me and you love to see what I've got to say. Because there were things said in the—

Interjection.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Exactly. Some people just come to the Legislature for this. Exactly. And so I want to be able to tell you this is not a big bill. I mean, the Liberals present it as if somehow they are at the forefront of safety for our kids, that it's almost revolutionary what they're doing; in fact, when people across the country get to know what they've done, they're going to start duplicating what the Liberals have done here in Ontario. You wait and see, because so far ahead you are.

All you are doing is simply putting in the form of a law what we are already doing in practice. If that's revolutionary, I'm not quite sure.

Mr. Jeff Leal: Historic.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I'm glad to tell you that most Liberals have not said it's an historic day, so that's good. Play it down a little bit.

Mr. Mike Colle: I'm going to go watch it on TV.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: You go relax, have some popcorn and some wine and just enjoy yourself.

I remember the minister's speech the other day and she said, "Schools don't exist in isolation from communities." I thought I said that on second reading. The point I made is that you've got to deal with prevention, that there's no point dealing with a problem in school when you haven't thought about how the problem comes into the school system and what it is that we could do before it becomes a problem.

So the minister kindly offers her opinion after that, and says "Schools don't exist in isolation from communities." That's right. The point I made was that there are a whole lot of social problems that exist, yes, outside of the school system and they're brought into the schools. What are we talking about? We're talking about special needs, mental illness, sexual abuse, substance abuse, alcohol or drugs at home. We're talking all sorts of problems that people have; the fetal alcohol syndrome that creates serious problems in children that are behavioural in nature but are not understood by teachers and/or doctors.

So I said to the minister, "These are the issues you've got to deal with." She confirmed that indeed that is the case. That this is not a simplistic approach, she was saying, and she's got other strategies, and not only does she have other strategies but there's more money devoted to social workers, psychologists, support workers and the like. I don't see them. So she on the one hand says, yes, we've got to do more; doesn't say we've got to do prevention, as I did, but recognizes there are problems; doesn't talk about how they're dealing with these problems, but at least she recognizes that, and then goes on to say that they're putting more money into social workers, psychologists, support workers. When I talk to these very people, they tell me there is a shortage of these people in the system. But if you listen to the minister, there is no shortage; in fact, she has been increasing services. So there's a disconnect between what is articulated by the minister and the parliamentary assistant versus what's really happening in the school system.

The safe schools action team—the final report was received in December, and Bill 157, the minister says, is but one piece of that and they will continue to provide a comprehensive response.

Interjection.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Speaker, there's a member who is speaking louder than I am, if you don't mind.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I need to hear the member for Trinity-Spadina and I would ask all members to allow me to do so. I'll return to the member for Trinity-Spadina.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: She says that Bill 157 is one piece of that and the comprehensive response is coming. Now we're five months into this report submitted by the parliamentary assistant and the safe schools action team, and what comes out of this report is this bill that does a couple of things, which I will speak to as I go. But the majority of recommendations have yet to be dealt with

and I'm assuming "in the fullness of time" means in my lifetime, because in five months, what we have out of 78 recommendations are two that are presented in this bill. I will speak to what OECTA said about this particular issue because they make a few good points, which I believe the parliamentary assistant and the ministry should have spoken to. But we still haven't acted on those.

The minister goes on to say, "We are now formalizing what is currently happening." She said that Ontario would be the first in Canada with legislation of this kind and that they're at the forefront. I'm giving a brief summary of what the minister said as a way of telling you that there wasn't much there. There isn't much in the bill, and there wasn't much more that was provided by the minister. And, to be unfair to the parliamentary assistant, who added some of her own comments, we didn't get much clarity from either of them in terms of what I said we needed to do.

Prevention for me is key, because if we do not understand what young people bring by way of social problems into the school and provide the resources and the support to those teachers to deal with them, teachers will not be adequately equipped to deal with those problems, and as a result, those problems will continue over and over again. I believe that's what we need to deal with.

The parliamentary assistant says that the statistics show that half of the girls in grades 9 and 11 reported sexual harassment and one third of the boys reported homophobic harassment. I say to myself, knowing what we know, including the Falconer report that spoke to this, what actions have we taken to deal with that? As far as I can tell, not much.

So the parliamentary assistant brings forward this information as part of her contribution to this debate, and I say to her and to you as a government, these are serious problems that you are well aware of, that the Falconer report has presented, to which you have not responded as a government, neither the minister nor the parliamentary assistant, and I'm puzzled as to why. You report the stats, which you as a government and Falconer have compiled, and yet you've done so little about it.

Where is the action on this five months into this report? All we have is Bill 157. We have the new equity and inclusive strategy, where 33 schools in urban, high-needs neighbourhoods are going to be getting some after-school activities and peer mentoring and some community use of schools as hubs. That's the basis of what we got from the parliamentary assistant about what we're doing with these problems. I'm telling you, it's not substantive. For me, it's not substantive in terms of how we deal with social, psychological and mental issues that teachers have to deal with on a daily basis. This is not an adequate response.

So I said to the minister when she talked about the new equity and inclusive strategy that you introduced this, yet in your info website, you allow for demographic information that includes the level of income of parents,

the level of education of parents, how many special students are in that school, how many new immigrants come into that school. You provide that information to parents and say, "This is what parents want." You call that part of a new equity and inclusive strategy, when you allow discriminatory practices to go on by the mere fact that you have allowed the compilation of this information and the facilitation of this information on a website for everybody to see, which permits parents to say, "This is a good school. This is a bad school. Don't send your kids here. Send them somewhere else"?

In the question that I asked the minister about whether she's going to keep the current policy that says you can only go to your local school or whether she's going to allow an implied strategy that says that you can now take your kid wherever you want—she didn't answer that question. It was the question that I posed to her today. Students can only go to their local schools, by and large, except for some different, extraordinary circumstances. Are you allowing by this strategy—which is implied—that kids can go somewhere else? She didn't answer that, which suggests that maybe there's a different kind of strategy afoot, that maybe the ministry is permitting some policy of choice for parents. I'm not quite sure. I know you're afraid of the thought. Even the word "choice" scares you, as it does me. I agree with you. Your minister should have said, "No, we're not changing our current policy," and when given the opportunity to do so and she doesn't deny it, one thinks, what else does she have in mind? As the OPSTA people, our trustee organization for Ontario, say, "It's implied that parents can do that." They're worried, and all the teacher federations are worried about this website. They all want this website to disappear, to go away. The minister is not saying to them, "You're right." In fact, she said to them, dismissively, "We like the demographics. The Premier says we'd like the demographics to stay," and so it stays. So all these collaborators with whom she's been working for years—what, we use them when they're with us, and when they're not, we simply dismiss them, as merely that they don't have the right information; that the minister is right and they're not? These collaborators, these teacher federations, OPSTA, trustees, students, are against this. Everybody appears to be against it except the Premier, the minister, and the tacit caucus that appears to agree with it—because I haven't heard anybody disagree with it.

1700

Anyway, so much for the new equity and inclusive strategy that the parliamentary assistant speaks of with the minister. So I wanted to comment on what the minister and the parliamentary assistant had said.

Now I want to get to what some of the collaborators, those who work in the educational system, have said about Bill 157, because they make some very useful suggestions.

OECTA, the Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association, in their brief, make a number of very useful suggestions, which I liked, by the way.

They say:

“OECTA believes some recommendations that would have helped ensure that schools are safer, have been ignored”—that’s hardly a strong word, but they have been ignored—including:

“(1)”—and it’s on page 21 of the report that the parliamentary assistant was a big participant in—“that the Ministry of Education must make available resources to school boards on effective intervention strategies for school staff;” Joyce, doesn’t that make sense as a recommendation? That recommendation was ignored.

“(2)”—on page 25 of the action team report—“that the Ministry of Education must develop a provincial manual to support school staff in responding to student-on-student incidents of sexual assault”—critical stuff, because I was moved to tears as, indeed, many of the Liberal members were, when we heard three parents talk about this very problem: student-on-student incidents of sexual assault. I have to tell you, I was very, very angry in terms of the information that I heard, that I believe to be true. Based on the information that I heard, the principals dealt with that very, very poorly, if not badly. In my view, when you have an issue of student-on-student incidents of sexual assault, that clearly requires action from principals, and that has written reports attached to it, and that advises the victims and those who victimized to deal with the problem, both for the abused and to deal with the abuser—nothing connected to that sort of thing. I’ve got to tell you, I asked very clearly, “Were the trustees informed?” “Yes.” “What did they do?” “Nothing.” In three incidents at those hearings, three parents talked about their experiences of their boys being sexually abused by other boys. I’m telling you, I have very little tolerance or patience when we don’t deal with these things adequately, in a speedy fashion and with the determination that we’re going to get to the bottom of it, that we’re going to solve it, that we’re going to deal with it and everybody at the end of the process, however hurtful, is going to be either unhappy or happy but dealt with adequately, properly.

OECTA makes this recommendation:

“(3) that the Ministry of Education must develop support materials for boards to assist principals with a process for investigating incidents, including investigations involving students with special education needs”—another good recommendation, three very good recommendations that are part of the report that the safe schools action team has put together, and we haven’t seen any action on that. There was no mention of this in the bill. There was no discussion and no possible debate about the fact that we need to deal with these issues included in the safe schools action team’s report that is clearly connected to the hearings, that is clearly connected to the bill.

We got absolutely nothing, yet there is clear direction given by the action team on how to deal with this. All we have are two recommendations that are part of this bill, and all the other 76 recommendations are yet to be dealt with, and I am getting old. I don’t know how long I will

be here, and it would be nice to think that the next 76 recommendations might be acted on. I’m telling you, if within five months we acted on two, and then we act within the next five months on another two, you understand that we’re never going to get to it in my lifetime.

Most of my Liberal colleagues on the other side are not responding; that’s okay. But I thought I would point out what OECTA said, what the parliamentary assistant knows because it’s part of her report. I’m telling you that what OECTA suggests is critical to this debate: “Make available resources to school boards on effective intervention strategies,” “develop a provincial manual to support school staff in responding to student-on-student incidents of sexual assault” and “develop support materials for boards to assist principals with a process for investigating incidents.” It’s good stuff. I would have done that before I introduced this bill, not after. I would have done that before, so that by the time the bill comes, you can already say as a government, “Here are the things we have already done.”

The other point they make on page 6 of their report: OECTA has grave concerns with 300.4 of the bill, which I’ll read for the benefit of the citizens watching: “If the Minister has established policies or guidelines under subsection 301(5.4), an employee of a board who observes a pupil of a school of the board behaving in a way that is likely to have a negative impact on the school climate shall intervene in accordance with those policies and guidelines and in accordance with any policies and guidelines established by the board under subsection 302(3.1).” OECTA says this about that, and then I’ll have my own view. They have grave concerns about this section that I just read. “The duty to intervene contemplated in” that section “will come into effect when the ministry and the board enact the applicable policies and guidelines. Any intervention on the part of board employees must comply with these policies and guidelines. In addition, a regulation may be passed that would define the circumstances in which a duty to intervene exists.... Currently, teachers use their professional judgment to make decisions about when it is appropriate and/or safe to intervene. Requiring teachers and other board employees to intervene when they observe risky, violent or dangerous student conduct at school is not only hazardous, but violates their right to refuse unsafe work under the Occupational Health and Safety Act. It forces the teacher or employee to make ... subjective decisions about the circumstances and events. Since Bill 157 already mandates a duty to report, it is not necessary to also require intervention. Calling for such intervention makes unfair and unreasonable demands of professionals who chose a career in teaching—not policing. In addition to the risks faced by employees who intervene, it is not clear whether the boards would be expected to assume liability for their employees who act in accordance with the requirements under section 300.4 should complaints be made to the children’s aid society....”

1710

It isn’t just OECTA that spoke to this. Other affiliates made the same point, and I made this point during second

reading. During second reading, I said that the bill obligates teachers to intervene. They have a duty to intervene when they see homophobic kinds of incidents and/or violent exchanges between students and/or any other incident that involves that kind of exchange, that kind of violence being shown by one person to the other, and/or name-calling, which might be safer than violence against two students who may be big boys, and a woman teacher might have to intervene.

I pointed out that this is a serious issue, that a teacher, by law, as it was currently written, as it was then written, and now modified—that it would have put an enormous pressure and a liability issue on the teacher to intervene, because if they did not, they would be liable.

The teachers pointed out that that's a concern. We pointed out that it was a concern. I'm happy to report that the government, on that one, listened, because you've got to give them credit. They were criticized by a few of us, and in the end they said, "Hmm. Maybe they have something there, and we might have to change the law." The Liberals can speak to their own changes, but at least they changed that one, to be fair to them. It took a little bit of persuasion, but it worked.

Let me get to another comment, made by a parent, who said on page 5 of her report, "What does our Ministry of Education intend to do with some or all of the very good recommendations put forth by the safe schools action team?" It was a good question. OECTA asks the same question. This parent asks the same question. I asked the very same question in second reading. I ask it again in third reading: When is this comprehensive response to the safe schools action team coming? Because I quite frankly do not have the confidence that the minister and/or this government will deal with these issues comprehensively. I'm telling you that they will come at a snail's pace, and that's not very helpful to anyone.

A report by OSSTF/FEESO, a submission to the standing Committee—the other acronym, FEESO, stands for "Fédération des enseignantes-enseignants des écoles secondaires de l'Ontario." On page 4, they say the following:

"Training—who has or will be trained in appropriate use of intervention methods? Teachers' and educational professionals' training is in curriculum and other kinds of support services, such as therapy and assessment. They are not trained nor do they have a mandate to intervene with youth violence....

"What kind of support/protection will be available to a member who is injured while intervening?"

As you can see, OSSTF has the same concerns, and had the same concerns, about the duty to intervene and the lack of training for teachers to intervene.

I am suggesting to you, Speaker, that the government has removed the duty to intervene, but in regulation, teachers will be required to respond, as the language goes in the new bill. It will be interesting to see what the regulations will say, and it will be interesting to see whether or not training will be part of what teachers will get as a way for them to be able to respond to issues of

serious bullying, serious aggression with one student and another or serious violence with one student against another.

I don't believe, quite frankly, the training is forthcoming. I don't believe it will happen. And even if told to us by the minister or the parliamentary assistant or the deputy that training is happening or has happened, I quite frankly do not believe that they will have that—do not believe it. The resources are simply not there for that to happen.

As a result, teachers will have a duty to respond without the adequate training. Poor teachers who have got to be policemen and policewomen. So many demands are being put on these people, I don't know how they do it sometimes. They have a duty to teach, but more and more every day, every year, they are obligated and have a duty to do more than just teach, and they're not taught at the faculties to do all the things that are required of them. God bless them.

Another submission by CUPE on this bill, and it's rather long. I'm going take a drink and then read it for the record.

"Reporting to the principal

"An employee of a board who becomes aware that a pupil of a school of the board may have engaged in an activity described in subsection 306(1) or 310(1) shall, as soon as reasonably possible, report to the principal of the school about the matter.

"Same

"(2) Subsection (1) does not require an employee to report to a principal about a matter if the employee;

"(a) knows that a report has already been made to the principal about the matter; and

"(b) has no reason to believe that his or her report would provide the principal with useful additional information."

"CUPE Ontario submits that this section creates an unworkable process for CUPE members in Ontario schools and as such represents problematic legislative involvement in the operation of Ontario schools.

"CUPE Ontario submits that this section, if enacted, would create a needless volume of unnecessary and repetitive reports from CUPE-represented board employees to school principals. Currently, CUPE members, as vital members of the school community, report incidents and events to school principals where and when they become aware of situations that represent potentially harmful situations in Ontario schools.

"The proposed amendment to the Education Act attempts to create a legislated obligation to report and then introduces two impossible-to-enact exceptions to this obligation.

"How could an employee with confidence know that a report about an incident has already been made to a principal? To suggest that only one incident report is needed unnecessarily limits the information available to school administrators about potentially serious situations that may be occurring in the school community.

"The second of the proposed exceptions implies that CUPE-represented school board employees would not

need to report incidents if their reports contain no new information. How, without reporting and discussing an incident with a principal, could an employee possibly determine that their information regarding an incident does not represent new information for the administration of the school?

"This amendment to the Education Act, in CUPE Ontario's view, creates an unworkable obligation on employees with the inclusion of the two exceptions. If this amendment is necessary in the view of the government, then CUPE Ontario proposes that the two exceptions be removed from the legislation.

"Additionally, if an obligation to report is created through legislation, then we believe that there must be some provision which relieves employees of any legal liability in cases where they make a report. In this respect, a possible model would be section 346 of the Education Act, which protects the Education Improvement Commission from liability."

1720

It was a good intervention. It was an intervention that persuaded the Liberals, the parliamentary assistant and the minister to change that section and make it so that it's workable and does not provide an incredible, copious amount of letter-writing that they would have had to do to protect themselves from any liability. In this regard once again, the government members listened, and we applaud them for having done that.

Intervention by board employees is another issue that they spoke to:

"300.4(1) If the minister has established policies or guidelines under subsection 301(5.4), an employee of a board who observes a pupil of a school of the board behaving in a way that is likely to have a negative impact on the school climate shall intervene in accordance with those policies and guidelines and in accordance with any policies and guidelines established by the board."

"CUPE Ontario believes that this final amendment should be reconsidered as it requires CUPE-represented school board employees to make judgment calls about the type of student conduct that 'is likely to have a negative impact on the school climate' and to intervene in such situations.

"This section of Bill 157 will require substantial definition through policies or guidelines that the Ministry of Education may establish. In light of the open-ended scope of the concept of a negative impact on school climate, it is difficult to understand what sort of situations and interventions this section may require of CUPE-represented board employees.

"It is the view of CUPE Ontario that only properly trained school board employees should be making interventions with students. The need for appropriate training was clearly identified in the recent report of the Safe Schools Action Team report. CUPE supports the action team's recommendation on training:

"—School boards must provide teachers, other school staff, school administrators, and trustees with sensitivity training in the areas of gender-based violence, homo-

phobia, sexual harassment, and inappropriate sexual behaviour.

"—School boards must provide principals, teachers, and other school staff with training on effective intervention practices to deal with gender-based violence, homophobia, sexual harassment, and inappropriate sexual behaviour on a routine basis.

"—School boards should work with their local children's aid societies to develop and implement annual training for school administrators, teachers, and school staff on their duty to report under the Child and Family Services Act."

These were the suggestions that were made by the Safe Schools Action Team report which CUPE highlights once again. I've got to tell you, their presentation was listened to as well and their duty to intervene was equally eliminated, and with good reason. We applaud the Liberals for removing what otherwise would have been a terrible mistake in law. They listened to that.

So at the end of it, you say, "Hmm. How much left is there of this bill?" Well, there are a couple of items. When I deal with the two remaining items, I say to myself, what do we have of substance in this bill? I will let the Liberal members who are listening and the citizens who are listening determine for themselves how revolutionary this bill ultimately will be.

Marchese made an amendment to Bill 157, and it reads as follows: "I move that subsection 300.1 of the act ... be amended by adding the following sections:

"Same

"(5) A delegation under this section shall be in accordance with" current employee "collective agreements."

We would actually prefer that schools never be left without an administrator. We have concerns about schools being short-staffed and about the impact that a delegation of this rule will have on the classroom. We are prepared, however, to allow our concerns to be dealt with within collective agreements, where they exist. Many collective agreements have articles dealing with the concept of a teacher in charge, coverage of classes, planning and preparation time, and feel that any proposed legislation must respect these agreements.

Further:

"A delegation under this section shall be made from a list of employees who have volunteered for" possible "delegation."

We do not believe that a principal should simply choose a favourite person or willy-nilly choose a teacher to be the delegate unless that teacher has volunteered to do so. Should a delegation be required, we feel that the interests of the students would be best served by the delegation of responsibility only to employees who have indicated their willingness to accept it. This would ensure that the position is filled by employees who feel they have the experience required, and we feel that this amendment will greatly improve the probability of success should such a delegation of responsibility be required.

We introduced that amendment as well and we felt it was a reasonable request, that all principals in every school would have a list of those who volunteer, and then, in the absence of a principal, you go through that list and you've got someone who's already delegated because they volunteered to do so.

Finally, if the delegation is in violation of a current collective agreement or there are no volunteer candidates for delegation, "the delegation must be made from a list of experienced administrators that the board creates for the purpose." This is actually our preferred position since we feel that no school should ever be without a qualified administrator. Meetings for administrators should take place as much as possible outside of school hours, not during the school day. If a supply teacher can be provided to replace an absent teacher, then a supply administrator can be provided to replace an absent principal or vice-principal. The board could create a supply list made up of retired principals and vice-principals.

I felt that these recommendations, by way of amendments presented, by and large, by many of the presenters were reasonable; they were rejected by the parliamentary assistant. Arguments were made which I think are untenable and unreasonable. If some of the Liberal members of committee and/or the parliamentary assistant would like to give their reasons in public here on third reading, I would welcome them, because they, quite frankly, do not make much sense.

So we say, first, that a delegation under this section shall be in accordance with current employee collective agreements where they exist; that a delegation under this section must be made from a list of employees who have volunteered; and third, that if the delegation's in violation of a current collective agreement or there are no volunteer candidates for delegation, the delegation must be made from a list of experienced administrators that the board will create for this purpose. They were rejected.

Where there were reasonable changes made by the government, because the presenters made good arguments against their bill motions—this too would have been something that I believe the Liberals could have supported and should have supported, and did not. I present them in this House so that people know that we moved an amendment—very reasonable—and it was rejected by them.

The other amendment that I want to speak to was introduced by the Conservatives, and I found it reasonable too. I think some changes could have been made to the motion presented by the Conservatives, but they had no interest in doing that, it appeared to me. I made a friendly amendment to one of their amendments, which was accepted by the Conservatives. I think it helped it a little bit. I think if the Liberals were interested in this, they could have made some amendments that would have made this bill much more effective.

1730

I will read it for the record because I think it's helpful. The Conservatives moved that the bill be amended by adding the following section to the act:

"If the principal of a school believes that a pupil of the school has been harmed as a result of an activity described in subsection 306(1) or 310(1), the principal shall, as soon as reasonably possible, notify" either, and we added "the superintendent," which was my suggestion as an amendment,

"(a) the chair of the board;

"(b) the director of education...;

"(c) the appropriate police department; and

"(d) if the activity is sexual in nature, the appropriate children's aid society."

It doesn't say that the principal must notify all of them. The amendment was that the principal would notify one of them. I find it reasonable. I find it reasonable that if we're talking about a serious issue where a child has been harmed—and yes, we would have to discuss what "harm" is in some way so that we don't say that every minor issue is cause for harm or is harm. You can't do that. You can't just simply report every issue on the basis of possible harm. We're talking about serious harm: that if serious harm happens, then it's the duty of the principal to notify somebody else, a superior, so that you make the best judgment with other people, and in effect cover yourself, so to speak, in terms of the judgment you make on your own.

I thought that was a good one. I thought it was a reasonable thing to do. It was rejected by the Liberals. They said, "Oh, there are too many thousands of possible issues that could come to our attention. We couldn't possibly do it all." I thought that if they wanted to be helpful, they could have tightened up the language and made that a very reasonable amendment, and not because Tories introduced it but because it was a duty of legislators to find a way who help students who have been harmed in one way or another. They rejected that one, and they rejected the one I'm about to read, which is:

"Safety plan

"300.3.2(1) If the principal of a school believes that a pupil of the school has been harmed as a result of an activity described in subsection 306(1) or 310(1), the principal shall, as soon as reasonably possible, develop a written safety plan for the harmed pupil and implement the plan."

I said to myself, what's wrong with that? If someone has been harmed, the principal should, as soon as reasonably possible, develop a written safety plan for the harmed pupil. What could be wrong with that? Yes, it might take a little more time for the principal, and yes, principals are overworked. I understand that. But if we're talking about harm to a student from which some students do not recover very easily or very well, then you have a written safety plan.

Is it wrong that the Conservatives introduced that amendment because they did?

Interjections.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I would encourage you, Jeff—if you guys want to talk, go to the other side, because it's going to—

Interjection.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I know, but if you're going to talk, please go on the other side.

A written safety plan for the harmed pupil was a good idea. I can say that as a New Democrat because the ultimate goal is how to protect students. It's not about me defending Tories; it's about me defending an appropriate measure and an appropriate amendment that would defend young people in the event that they've been harmed, and that a principal should have a written safety plan. I don't get it. I didn't get it then and I don't get it now as I read it.

"When developing a safety plan for a pupil, the principal shall consult with teachers who in the principal's opinion are likely to have an insight into what would constitute a helpful and appropriate plan for the pupil."

I thought, "Okay; eminently reasonable, once again." It was rejected.

The third one:

"Documentation by a principal

"300.3.3 If the principal of a school believes that a pupil of the school has been harmed as a result of an activity described in subsection 306(1) or 310(1), the principal shall maintain written documentation,

"(a) describing the activity and the harm;

"(b) describing the actions taken in response to the activity and the harm; and

"(c) setting out the reasons for the actions taken in response to the activity and the harm."

I thought, "Okay, that's another reasonable request. The principal shall maintain written documentation. How could you possibly be against that?" Well, the Liberals were. The parliamentary assistant and the members of that committee voted down that amendment. And I've got to tell you, there was no effort by the government to try to make it work, no effort whatsoever.

So that's the extent of the debate that we had, some of the presentations made by many, including the three parents I made mention of who told their tragic stories of sexual abuse and sexual violence of boys against boys and the inadequacy of the principal's response and the inadequacy of the trustees' response—not only inadequacy, but the lack of a response from the trustees and the lack of response from some of the boards who knew about some of these issues. I tell you, I was utterly frustrated by that and felt that action needed to be taken and that the minister and the parliamentary assistant should have dealt with this issue as recommended by the safe schools action team. They did nothing about that, leaving us, the MPPs and the parents, thinking that the government is simply not listening to them.

Upon review of all of this, I say to myself, "What's left in this bill?" Well, what's left of this skimpy bill is that teachers now have to report to the principal. This bill is about reporting a problem of bullying and of sexual violence or whatever form of violence to the principal. Most teachers will say, "We do report." We heard that; I hear that from federations. Some of them said, "The

problem is that we report it but we don't hear back from the principal." The principals that are good, like former principal Dave Levac, would have responded to the teachers and they would have had a plan in place to deal with the problem. But there are some principals who obviously may have received the information, may have been too busy to deal with it, may have forgotten because they're wrapped up in so many issues they've got to deal with, and so no written documentation, no response, no follow-up. Now the bill says you've got a duty to report.

Okay, duty to report; now what? What do we do once we've reported? It doesn't say. It doesn't say what we do once you report it. It doesn't talk about prevention, and it doesn't talk about what we do once we have the report about a problem in the school. With a student, with a violent act, with a serious issue of harm to students, there's no talk about what we do with this. This so-called wonderful bill that is going to be at the forefront of what, I do not know—it's a word the minister used—is legislation that will be the envy of everyone. I just don't know what is in this bill that will be the envy of anyone. Do you understand? There isn't much here.

1740

So we've had hearings, we have a bill, and we don't have much at the end of it. I've got to tell you I'm a bit disappointed. That's why in second reading I railed against the government about bringing something that talks about how you prevent the problem in the first place, because if you don't deal with that, this problem will continue over and over again, and it doesn't matter that you've disciplined somebody who caused harm; it doesn't matter because the problem will come back. If the problem is serious enough in nature, in terms of a mental illness or special ed issue, and/or an issue of substance abuse that's going on in the home or sexual abuse that's going on in the home—if that problem is there and we haven't dealt with it, and we haven't given the teachers the resources to know how to deal with it, the problem will come back, will repeat itself over and over again.

So I ask the parliamentary assistant, where are the issues connected to prevention? Tell me in detailed fashion how you are dealing with that. I ask the parliamentary assistant, who is leading the safe schools action group, when are you going to deal with some of the 76 recommendations contained in the report which address some of the matters that I have raised, that the parents have raised, that the teacher federations have raised, so that they can feel comforted in some way that you're actually going to help them, and in helping the teachers, thus help the students in some way? We've got nothing so far. We didn't get much in committee. We didn't get much from the parliamentary assistant and the minister in their lead on this bill. So I'm wondering, are there other members of that committee who are going to speak to this bill who will help to give some flesh to this bill, to make me feel at ease, to make the citizens feel at ease, to make the parents who are concerned feel at ease? I'm just hoping some of the Liberal members are going

to speak up, and if they don't and all we've got are speeches by the PA and the minister, it will be cold comfort to me and cold comfort to those who came to the committee hoping for something more.

This is it for my presentation. It will be difficult to oppose it. How do you oppose a simple bill that says, "Teachers shall report"—please, you're going to have to support it. So we're going to do that, but I can't help but be as critical as I possibly can of the inefficiencies of the bill, of the deficiencies of the bill, of what it doesn't do that it could have done, that it must do. I'm hoping that in my lifetime, or at least in the next two years, while they're still in government, some of the recommendations made by the schools action team will indeed be implemented by this government.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Liz Sandals: Only two minutes.

First of all, I would like to assure the member from Trinity-Spadina that he will not get old, at least not waiting for further implementation of the other 76 recommendations, because that's already happening. We have work going on, as I speak, addressing the curriculum revisions that the safe schools action team recommended, addressing the data collection, the survey recommendations, the sexual assault manual which the member mentioned extensively. That work is being done because the ministry agrees, the minister agrees, that that's absolutely crucial work; we're working on that. Lockdown procedures we're discussing with the police chiefs' association, and we've got some great work that's being done on that. In terms of the provincial policies that are already in place, we will be revising all of those to incorporate a number of our recommendations. So things like the existing PPM 144, which talks about prevention—we will be updating that with further information. Safety plans: That will go into regulation because we agree absolutely that safety plans are wonderful. The member raised the issue of training. We need to get these things in place, then we will do the training. You can't do the training before you have this all in place.

What about the legislation? What's in the legislation are the recommendations out of those 78 that actually require legislation. If you look at what the students told us, if you look at what at Egale Canada tells us, if you're dealing with homophobia and sexual harassment, the most crucial thing is to establish a positive school climate. You do that by making sure that all staff intervene and respond when there are incidents. That's what's in the legislation.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: I'd like to thank the member from Trinity-Spadina for his comments—well thought out. I was really pleased that he read into the record the amendments that were offered up that day.

This issue has no political boundaries, and yet the Liberal members on that committee, who form the majority of the committee, used this opportunity to vote against

every single amendment that was brought forward, whether it was by the NDP or the PCs, and I find that very regrettable.

Those amendments would have given this bill some substance and would have moved us forward in a positive direction. The government members said that they were listening. There were platitudes but there was absolutely no action when it came time to show that they really did understand what the experiences and observations of these folks telling their tragic stories were all about.

These amendments would have injected some clarity and some direction to the policy writers, to the regulation writers, those people who have to go away and try to figure out what it is the committee was actually talking about. They have nothing now. So we're going to leave all of this up to non-elected people and just wait and see what's going to happen.

Interjection.

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: I notice that the parliamentary assistant is laughing, which was noted, by the way, by many of the members who came to the committee to speak—that there was no emotion shown. They felt very, very out in the cold about it.

Interjection.

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: You received the e-mail.

These would have included accountability. They would have offered consequences to those who did not act to safeguard our kids through the education system when violent acts occurred. The government is asleep at the switch.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments? I return to the member for Trinity-Spadina.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I appreciate the comments made by the members from Guelph and Burlington.

I also appreciate the fact that the parliamentary assistant only has two minutes to respond. However, there are 20 minutes left to the other members to respond to the many things that I raised. I know that the parliamentary assistant simply cannot cover everything in two-minute responses, so I am urging the other members of the committee who were there to speak, and if they don't have any notes, to get them, so that they can respond to the things that I have raised.

I think that the government has a duty to respond to the amendments that I put forth on the whole issue of the delegation of responsibility to a teacher when a principal has to leave during the day, because I believe that the questions that I raised are very, very pertinent and need to be addressed. They haven't talked about that here in public. So when they have their 20 minutes, they could do this. They will have time—because they won't be able to do that today, possibly—to get notes from the others and also to respond to the amendment made by the Conservative member from Burlington, because I think that, as I indicated, it was a very useful, thoughtful recommendation that, if the Liberals had put some thought into it, could have been a very useful amendment that we could have all been happy with.

As a result of not doing that, we have made this bill much weaker than it is. In fact, if they had adopted those amendments, we would have had much less to be critical of. By not agreeing to them, we have a lot more to say, as you can imagine.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: I'll only have a few minutes to begin this, but I will begin.

I rise in the House today to speak to Bill 157, which is the Keeping Our Kids Safe at School amendment to the Education Act. But don't let that title fool you, because as you read the bill, it really doesn't do that at all. Unfortunately, the Liberal government has put forward at third reading a bill that will not, in fact, keep our kids safe in schools. What it will do is delude the government into thinking that they have done something to address the lack of accountability in the system when there is a student-on-student violent or sexual assault.

1750

The truth of the matter is that it was the PC caucus that brought forward real amendments that would safeguard our children to create consequences for those who fail to protect them. It is no wonder that the Liberals were not in favour of accountability measures. Their track record on accountability is less than stellar.

My first order of business here today is to begin to read into the record the victim impact statements of those courageous students, parents and their families who have suffered so greatly and who had hoped that Bill 157 would prevent other children from experiencing the same violence and abuse. They bravely, bravely stepped forward time and time again, reliving the victimization in the hope that this Liberal government would listen. I do not want their efforts to be in vain and I will continue to fight for them, just as this minister continues to let them down.

Several parents contributed to the public hearing process at the committee and their stories were so sensitive that we convened the meeting behind closed doors and off the Hansard record. After our amendments were defeated at committee, these brave parents once again wanted to ensure that they had made every effort to convince the Liberal government to strengthen this bill, so they opened up their hearts once again and are willing to have their stories read into the record. Without this painful account, it may be easy to dismiss their requests. I want the Minister of Education and this Liberal government to be aware of what is at stake here should they fail to create a real bill that protects our children.

The first victim impact statement belongs to a mother who has had to fight for her son's safety and security in school for far too long and who was ignored by the minister and the Ministry of Education repeatedly. It is also one of the most egregious cases of student-on-student abuse that has come to my attention. How anyone could fail to act in this case is beyond me, and I do not know how these people would sleep at night. But I want you to hear it in her own words, and I will read her statement for you now.

"It didn't matter how much I spoke up as a mother of a victim of student-on-student sexual abuse, nothing changed.

"I want to be a voice for families who have suffered the unimaginable at the hands of child perpetrators, a voice that many have tried to silence.

"There were no consequences for the perpetrator of our son after his disclosure due to the fact that the principal had not read the policies on sexual misconduct of children under the age of 12.

"By the time she read the policies, it was day three and she informed me that it was too late to suspend because the perpetrator was going to be home the next day as outside agencies continued their investigation.

"As time went on and I repeatedly addressed my concerns with regards to the perpetrator's actions the responses that I received were 'Mm-hmm' and 'Let it go.'

"Due to these responses and lack of due diligence in following policies, another child ended up being sexually abused as well, which went unreported to this child's family and" to children's aid.

"My family has continued to seek accountability. Seeing as no one at the Toronto District School Board will respond to my e-mails demanding accountability and justice.

"Rarely have I received a response from this Minister of Education as well.

"The board did investigate, but their final report was void of any discipline.

"The Toronto District School Board's response is to attempt an out-of-court settlement without a lawsuit being filed.

"I have taken my concerns to the College of Teachers, where my only hope for justice for my son and other victims lies.

"There has been no accountability for the failure to follow policies at any level, including this current government as well.

"As per the minister's regional office, they informed me that the trustees are the individuals who oversee the boards.

"I contacted them in March and they wanted the board to look at this case again.

"I informed them that as per the minister's regional office, they are the ones who should be overseeing and investigating this case separately.

"The chair of the board no longer responds to my e-mails to reopen this investigation either.

"How does our current minister continue to ignore such cover-ups with regard to the most heinous crimes against children?

"Those whose governing bodies we have filed on have now changed their stories since this case was investigated by the Toronto District School Board.

"Both the chair of the Toronto District School Board and our current education minister are aware of this case and its disturbing nature as well.

"As our minister implements Bill 157 to address some accountability with regard to those school principals whose inactions threaten our children's safety, it is imperative that she do the same when it comes to accountability of those who should be under her watchful eye.

"Our education minister stated the following in the Legislature on March 12, 2009: 'Even one incident of bullying or harassment in our schools is unacceptable. Each one is one too many. We know these incidents can have a lasting impact on the well-being of the people involved and on their families.'

"I draw my strength in knowing that my son knew that home was the safest place to come and always talked to me, no matter what he had to share.

"The sad reality is that the principal was well aware of what my son had endured and did nothing to create a safe environment for him and others.

"As per Bill 157, the principal decides whether or not the particular case they are dealing with would be harmful or not to report to parents of victims.

"There must be a requirement to report to police and the local children's aid society who are trained to deal with all aspects of abuse and cultural concerns as well.

"Giving principals this discretion only creates a further reporting gap and can be further used as an excuse for non-compliance and inaction.

"This ends up as nothing short of gross negligence in terms of the very name of this bill: Keeping Our Kids Safe at School.

"Our most vulnerable members of society deserve far better. Still, there are no consequences for not reporting student-on-student abuse.

"When there are legal consequences for failure to report, compliance usually prevails.

"Any abusive incidents that would be reported to the police if they happened off school property must have the same response by administrators while at school.

"Our children's safety can never be compromised while they are at school, due to a lack of clear requirements for mandatory reporting.

"On March 23, 2009, Minister Wynne stated the following: 'Our principals in all our schools are very responsible leaders.' I beg to differ.

"If this was the case, why are there so many families who continue to reach out to their MPPs and the media to share their concerns about bullying and student-on-student abuse?

"As parents, fighting for two years in an attempt to get accountability is beyond disgusting.

"Seeing an attempt to downplay my son's disclosure to take away from administrative inaction and failure only adds further insult to injury, for not only our son, but my immediate and extended family as well.

"It is only by doing the following that Bill 157 will do what it was actually intended to do:

"—consequences for school administrators who fail to not only follow policies and procedures but proper reporting requirements put in place to ensure our students' safety;

"—allocate counselling resources immediately for victim and abuser;

"—a mandated safety plan that is implemented with input from the victim's family and amended with their consent as well;

"—a safety plan that is enforced and allows no form of contact between victim and perpetrator; even passing in a hallway would not be acceptable;

"—a safety plan that would have the perpetrator change their routines, not the victim;

"—ensuring that mandatory reporting was truly mandatory reporting to the police and to the children's aid society;

"—remove words from this bill such as 'shall' and change the word to 'will'; and

"—take away phrases like 'as soon as reasonably possible.'

"Our family is unable to turn back time. However, we can move forward for the future and safety of our children. By implementing the changes spoken about, it will be then that this bill will be a step forward and will hopefully be the beginning of 'keeping our kids safe at school.'"

That's the end of the quote for the first impact statement. These are this mother's words; they're not my words.

It really upsets me to see the education system further victimize the student and the family. It is not just the child and the parents who struggle with the lingering effects of abuse; it is a weight on the family and in fact on the community. The 12-year-old daughter of our previous speaker was brave enough to tell her story and explain in her own words how her brother's ordeal with student-on-student sexual abuse has affected her family.

I will end there and take it up, hopefully, tomorrow.

Third reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): It being 6 o'clock, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 9 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1801.

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Arnott, Ted (PC)	Wellington–Halton Hills	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Arthurs, Wayne (LIB)	Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough-Est	
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia–Lambton	
Balkissoon, Bas (LIB)	Scarborough–Rouge River	
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand–Norfolk	
Bartolucci, Hon. / L'hon. Rick (LIB)	Sudbury	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels
Bentley, Hon. / L'hon. Christopher (LIB)	London West / London-Ouest	Attorney General / Procureur général
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (LIB)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	
Best, Hon. / L'hon. Margaret R. (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	Minister of Health Promotion / Ministre de la Promotion de la santé
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins–Baie James	
Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (LIB)	St. Catharines	Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Brotten, Laurel C. (LIB)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	
Brown, Michael A. (LIB)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Brownell, Jim (LIB)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
Bryant, Michael (LIB)	St. Paul's	
Cansfield, Hon. / L'hon. Donna H. (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	Minister of Natural Resources / Ministre des Richesses naturelles
Caplan, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Carroll, Hon. / L'hon. M. Aileen (LIB)	Barrie	Minister of Culture / Ministre de la Culture
		Minister Responsible for Seniors / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires des personnes âgées
Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Markham–Unionville	Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / Ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration
Chudleigh, Ted (PC)	Halton	
Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
Craitor, Kim (LIB)	Niagara Falls	
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		Deputy Speaker / Vice-président
Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga–Streetsville	
Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale–High Park	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
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Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones
		Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
Duncan, Hon. / L'hon. Dwight (LIB)	Windsor–Tecumseh	Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / Président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement
		Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
		Minister of Revenue / Ministre du Revenu
Dunlop, Garfield (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Elliott, Christine (PC)	Whitby—Oshawa	
Flynn, Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	
Fonseca, Hon. / L'hon. Peter (LIB)	Mississauga East—Cooksville / Mississauga-Est—Cooksville	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Gerretsen, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	Minister of the Environment / Ministre de l'Environnement
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay—Superior North / Thunder Bay—Superior-Nord	Minister of Northern Development and Mines / Ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Hampton, Howard (NDP)	Kenora—Rainy River	
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hoy, Pat (LIB)	Chatham—Kent—Essex	
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West—Glanbrook / Niagara- Ouest—Glanbrook	
Jaczek, Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges—Markham	
Jeffrey, Linda (LIB)	Brampton—Springdale	
Johnson, Rick (LIB)	Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock	
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin—Caledon	
Klees, Frank (PC)	Newmarket—Aurora	
Kormos, Peter (NDP)	Welland	Third Party House Leader / Leader parlementaire de parti reconnu
Kular, Kuldip (LIB)	Bramalea—Gore—Malton	
Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Lalonde, Jean-Marc (LIB)	Glengarry—Prescott—Russell	
Leal, Jeff (LIB)	Peterborough	
Levac, Dave (LIB)	Brant	
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean—Carleton	
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga—Brampton South / Mississauga—Brampton-Sud	
Marchese, Rosario (NDP)	Trinity—Spadina	
Martiniuk, Gerry (PC)	Cambridge	
Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	London North Centre / London- Centre-Nord	Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Mauro, Bill (LIB)	Thunder Bay—Atikokan	
McGuinty, Hon. / L'hon. Dalton (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	Minister of Economic Development / Ministre du Développement économique Premier / Premier ministre Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
McMeekin, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (LIB)	Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough— Westdale	Minister of Government Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux
McNeely, Phil (LIB)	Ottawa—Orléans	
Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa—Vanier	Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound—Muskoka	
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East—Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est—Stoney Creek	
Milloy, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Mitchell, Carol (LIB)	Huron—Bruce	
Moridi, Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	
Munro, Julia (PC)	York—Simcoe	
Murdoch, Bill (PC)	Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound	
Naqvi, Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	
O'Toole, John (PC)	Durham	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Orazietti, David (LIB)	Sault Ste. Marie	
Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Oshawa	
Pendergast, Leeanna (LIB)	Kitchener—Conestoga	
Peters, Hon. / L'hon. Steve (LIB)	Elgin—Middlesex—London	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
Phillips, Hon. / L'hon. Gerry (LIB)	Scarborough—Agincourt	Chair of Cabinet / Président du Conseil des ministres Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Prue, Michael (NDP)	Beaches—East York	
Pupatello, Hon. / L'hon. Sandra (LIB)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	Minister of International Trade and Investment / Ministre du Commerce international et de l'Investissement
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Ramal, Khalil (LIB)	London—Fanshawe	
Ramsay, David (LIB)	Timiskaming—Cochrane	
Rinaldi, Lou (LIB)	Northumberland—Quinte West	
Runciman, Robert W. (PC)	Leeds—Grenville	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle
Ruprecht, Tony (LIB)	Davenport	
Sandals, Liz (LIB)	Guelph	
Savoline, Joyce (PC)	Burlington	
Sergio, Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	
Shurman, Peter (PC)	Thornhill	
Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Monique M. (LIB)	Nipissing	Minister of Tourism / Ministre du Tourisme Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Smitherman, Hon. / L'hon. George (LIB)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	Deputy Premier / Vice-premier ministre Minister of Energy and Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Énergie et de l'Infrastructure
Sorbara, Greg (LIB)	Vaughan	
Sousa, Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	
Sterling, Norman W. (PC)	Carleton—Mississippi Mills	
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto—Danforth	Deputy Third Party House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de parti reconnu
Takhar, Hon. / L'hon. Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga—Erindale	Minister of Small Business and Consumer Services / Ministre des Petites Entreprises et des Services aux consommateurs
Van Bommel, Maria (LIB)	Lambton—Kent—Middlesex	
Watson, Hon. / L'hon. Jim (LIB)	Ottawa West—Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest—Nepean	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Wilkinson, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Perth—Wellington	Minister of Research and Innovation / Ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe—Grey	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Witmer, Elizabeth (PC)	Kitchener—Waterloo	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Yakubski, John (PC)	Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke	
Zimmer, David (LIB)	Willowdale	

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Gilles Bisson, Bob Delaney
Garfield Dunlop, Kevin Daniel Flynn
Tim Hudak, Amrit Mangat
Phil McNeely, Yasir Naqvi
John O'Toole
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permanent des affaires gouvernementales**

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Robert Bailey, Jim Brownell
Linda Jeffrey, Kuldip Kular
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Joyce Savoline
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permanent des organismes gouvernementaux**

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Michael A. Brown, Howard Hampton
Rick Johnson, Lisa MacLeod
Gerry Martiniuk, Julia Munro
David Ramsay, Lou Rinaldi
Liz Sandals
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Douglas Arnott

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la justice**

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Jerry J. Ouellette, Liz Sandals
Norman W. Sterling, Maria Van Bommel
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permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé**

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Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

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Kevin Daniel Flynn, France Gélinas
Helena Jaczek, Sylvia Jones
Jeff Leal, Liz Sandals
Maria Van Bommel
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Susan Sourial

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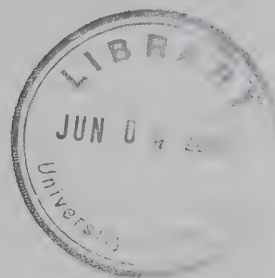
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Première session, 39^e législature

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

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Wednesday 27 May 2009

Mercredi 27 mai 2009

Speaker
Honourable Steve Peters

Président
L'honorable Steve Peters

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Greffière
Deborah Deller

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 27 May 2009

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 27 mai 2009

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Good morning. Please remain standing for the Lord's Prayer, followed by a moment of silence for inner thought and personal reflection.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

APPOINTMENT OF INFORMATION AND PRIVACY COMMISSIONER

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I move that an humble address be presented to the Lieutenant Governor in Council as follows:

"We, Her Majesty's most dutiful and loyal subjects, the Legislative Assembly of the province of Ontario, now assembled, request the reappointment of Ann Cavoukian as the Information and Privacy Commissioner for a term of five years, commencing on July 1, 2009, as provided in section 4 of the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, RSO 1990, c.F.31.

"And that the address be engrossed and presented to the Lieutenant Governor in Council by the Speaker."

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Ms. Smith has moved government notice of motion number 136. Debate?

Hon. Monique M. Smith: It's my privilege today to stand in the House and to move the reappointment of Ann Cavoukian as our Information and Privacy Commissioner.

The role of the Information and Privacy Commissioner, as many in this House know, is set out in three statutes: the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, and the Personal Health Information Protection Act. The Information and Privacy Commissioner acts independently of government to uphold and promote open government and the protection of personal privacy.

Under the three acts, the Information and Privacy Commissioner resolves access-to-information appeals and complaints when government or health care practitioners and organizations refuse to grant requests for access or correction, investigates complaints with respect to personal information held by government or health care practitioners and organizations, conducts research into access and privacy issues, comments on proposed

government legislation and programs, and educates the public about Ontario's access and privacy legislation.

In 2008, there were 37,933 information requests of our government and its agencies. Nearly two thirds of the 2008 requests were filed under the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act to such organizations as police service boards, municipalities, school boards and health boards.

Since the Information and Privacy Commissioner began emphasizing the importance of quickly responding to freedom-of-information requests, our compliance with the provincial 30-day compliance rate has nearly doubled, climbing to 85%, and I'm particularly proud of our government to reach that level of compliance with the 30-day requirement set out in the legislation.

Today, it's our privilege to confirm the reappointment of Dr. Ann Cavoukian, who is recognized as one of the leading privacy experts in the world. Dr. Cavoukian's leadership has seen her office develop a number of tools and procedures to ensure that privacy is protected in Ontario and around the world. She is Ontario's first Information and Privacy Commissioner to be reappointed. In fact, she began in 1987, during its start-up phase, as its first director of compliance.

In 1990, she was appointed assistant commissioner. Prior to joining the IPC—the Office of the Information and Privacy Commission—Dr. Cavoukian headed the research services branch of the provincial Attorney General. She received her MA and her Ph.D. in psychology from the University of Toronto, where she specialized in criminology and law and lectured on psychology and criminal justice. She has been reappointed once before and, like the Auditor General, she serves as an officer of the Legislature, independent of the government of the day.

In 2007, Dr. Cavoukian received the distinguished Dr. Barbara Wand Award from the Ontario Psychological Association to acknowledge her outstanding work in the area of ethics and professional standards pertaining to privacy and freedom of information.

In November 2006, Dr. Cavoukian was honoured by the Ontario Bar Association for her outstanding contributions to protecting privacy rights in Ontario, her inclusive leadership role in involving both the public and private sectors and her success in promoting understanding of and respect for access to information and privacy rights.

In October 2005, Commissioner Cavoukian was presented with the Privacy Innovation Award at the largest-ever gathering of privacy professionals held by the Inter-

national Association of Privacy Professionals. Dr. Cavoukian and her office were recognized for the development of groundbreaking privacy short notices—a concise and easily understood notice informing individuals of how their personal information is being used. Commissioner Cavoukian, who received the honour on behalf of the office, was honoured when she accepted that award and stated, “To have my office recognized for its innovative work in this field is truly gratifying. I’ve always believed that a practical approach advances privacy the most. Creating privacy notices that are short and easily understood maximizes our effectiveness in reaching the public.”

I believe that’s Dr. Cavoukian’s trademark: She does make it easy for people to understand what their rights are, and she certainly has worked tirelessly to ensure that their rights are protected in the province. It is without hesitation that I move her reappointment to the position of Information and Privacy Commissioner, and I look forward to hearing my colleagues on this topic.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mr. Ted Arnott: I’m very pleased and honoured to have a chance to participate briefly in this debate this morning because it’s always a pleasure to rise and pay tribute to one of Ontario’s outstanding public servants.

The Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner acts independently of government to uphold and promote open government and the protection of personal privacy. To be effective and accountable, our system of government depends on this kind of openness, transparency and protection of personal privacy. It’s essential, therefore, for Ontario to have a privacy commissioner who offers ample knowledge, strong independence and unfailing integrity. That’s why we in the PC caucus are pleased to know that Ann Cavoukian will continue to serve this province with distinction for what I understand is an unprecedented third term.

Dr. Cavoukian received an MA and a Ph.D. in psychology from the University of Toronto, where she specialized in criminology and law and lectured on psychology and the criminal justice system. Dr. Cavoukian is the published author of two groundbreaking books on privacy, entitled *Who Knows? Safeguarding Your Privacy in a Networked World*, which was published in 1997, and *The Privacy Payoff: How Successful Businesses Build Customer Trust*, which was published in 2002.

Her awards are many. She received the distinguished Dr. Barbara Wand Award from the Ontario Psychological Association, which the government House leader already alluded to. She was named the International Association of Business Communicators’ All-Star speaker. The Ontario Bar Association honoured her outstanding contributions to protecting privacy rights in Ontario. She received the Privacy Innovation Award from the International Association of Privacy Professionals. The list goes on and on. She has been named one of Canada’s top 100 most powerful women.

Dr. Cavoukian has always been a trailblazer. Under her leadership, her office has introduced new tools, technologies and procedures to ensure that Ontarians’ privacy is protected. In doing so, she has made her office more acceptable, responsible and understandable to all of us. When called upon by elected officials or the media, she knows how to distil and explain complex issues of privacy and security in a clear and recognizable way. It is obvious that Ontario is very fortunate to have Ann Cavoukian carry on her service in this critical capacity. On behalf of the Ontario PC caucus, we congratulate the commissioner, and we look forward to continuing to work with her in the coming years.

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The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mr. Peter Kormos: Ms. Cavoukian, should she be listening now or should she read the Hansard down the road, I’m sure will fear she has died—these sound like eulogies—or at the very least that she has retired, and it’s obvious that she has no intention of retiring.

Look, New Democrats share, and certainly don’t dispute, any of the comments about Ms. Cavoukian—a career that has been impressive. But New Democrats do not support this motion here today, and let me tell you why.

First of all, the position of an officer of the assembly is an incredibly important one, and it’s unique because it is not a partisan appointment. The officers of this assembly, in the time that I’ve been here, have served this assembly in that non-partisan role very, very effectively, and as often as not to the chagrin of the government of the day. That’s what they’re supposed to do.

There was a time, not that long ago, when these appointments were made as a result of, oh, a backroom meeting between House leaders. There was a time when reappointments were a matter of course. There was a time when there was very little transparency or public process about these appointments. That has changed considerably and, I say, for the better. It’s something that New Democrats, during the time I have been fortunate enough to be House leader for this caucus, have worked very hard to do: to create consistency from appointment to appointment to ensure that the process that’s used is the same, whether it’s the privacy commissioner or the Integrity Commissioner or the conflict of interest commissioner or any number of people who serve as officers of the assembly—the Environmental Commissioner.

We were encouraged—and in fact, it was during the last Conservative government, the Eves government—that the government acquiesced to a uniform hiring and reappointment process. We were very pleased. We recognize that, as in almost all legislation that provides for the appointment of an officer of the assembly, there is the power of reappointment, and we consider that an appropriate thing. But in this case, section 4 of the act provides for a five-year term. Whether or not that five-year term is an appropriate one is yet another question, and that’s something we’re prepared to discuss, because it’s acknowledged that somebody entering a job, for instance,

Ms. Cavoukian or any other officer of the assembly—the Integrity Commissioner, the Ombudsman—in the first month, year, two years may well find herself or himself acclimatizing or reorganizing. So we don't want terms that are so brief that, by the time they've become proficient at what they do and by the time they have put their imprimatur on the style of that particular office, they're shown the exit door.

We also believe that the reason we provide for terms—of course, any appointed person can be removed by the will of this assembly, so it's not as if they acquire some sort of sinecure. The fixed term is a fixed term, but it can be interrupted, should the assembly no longer wish to have that person serving the assembly.

We think the so-called term limits are very important things. We believe they allow the person appointed to act with an even higher level of impartiality that they assume by virtue of their commitment to the job and their professionalism. We also believe that these types of jobs, these types of roles, should not become long-term roles that exist—there was a clerk here, Mr. Lewis, who ruled this House. He wrote a book about it; he didn't call it "Rule this House," but it seemed he ruled this House for not just decades and scores of years—to some people, for centuries. Everything I've heard about Mr. Lewis has been, by and large, positive—a skilled man. But upon reflection, I think a whole lot of people feel there was a failure in one person occupying that role for such a lengthy period of time.

There are legitimate reasons to have, effectively, term limits when it comes to these types of appointments. There are good reasons why one might want to reappoint, without process, a particular person. One might want to reappoint to cover or bridge a particular period of time, a gap. As I recall, that was the case with our last Integrity Commissioner, Mr. Osborne, where his reappointment was for a period of time shorter than the term, knowing full well that he was going to be leaving and that we didn't have the opportunity to acquire a new Integrity Commissioner—again, we're still waiting. But the process has been working.

New Democrats are adamant that even upon the occasion of a reappointment, unless it's an exceptional circumstance and notwithstanding the stellar capacity of a person who has served that role, there should be the same process. As I say, if five years is an inappropriately short period of time, then let's talk about expanding that. I don't know what it should be. Should it be five, seven, 10 years? That may well be the case. One may want to establish some sort of at least interim permanency to these positions, so that people taking them know they're not going to be shown the door in about five years' time.

New Democrats are very disappointed in that Ms. Cavoukian, upon exhausting her term—we weren't disappointed in that, or in the service. We were disappointed in the government, because rather than agreeing to embark on a process—and the process is pretty clear. You advertise the position, you see who's interested in the job, you vet them—we use the human resources per-

sonnel here at the Legislative Assembly; it's not governmental—and then a tripartite committee. This is a process that has developed over the last relatively short period of time, and the one thing we've always required is unanimity—consensus on the part of all three caucuses—in the selection of a person, and we've been very successful at achieving that. There have been times when one caucus might have been less enthusiastic than the other two, but they've always found ways of working that out and addressing that. In terms of the appointments that have flowed as a result of the process, there has always been unanimity, and I think that's a very healthy thing; it's a very positive thing. If the person in that role is going to serve the Legislative Assembly as a whole, then surely unanimity, as compared to majority rule, is a far healthier means of doing it.

What New Democrats proposed in this instance, as we have in every other one, is that once again there be a process that Ms. Cavoukian be invited to participate in, and she may well find herself reappointed. But that was not the wish of the government. We have no control over the fact that the government brings this sort of motion and will undoubtedly pass it because of its majority. Our opposition to the motion is in no way a reflection upon Ms. Cavoukian. Our opposition to the motion is our concern about the fact that, yes, this is unprecedented. This is a third term, and that is unprecedented. We believe that when the appointment expires, unless there are outstanding circumstances, the process that has worked so well over the recent past should be applied. It's for that reason that we cannot support this motion.

You'll recall that we were in a similar position with respect to the reappointment of Mr. Osborne as Integrity Commissioner. Again, we didn't do it with glee, in terms of opposing that particular motion, because we had the highest regard, and continue to, for Mr. Osborne, now the former and retired Integrity Commissioner. But I tell you, this is a step backwards; it's an unfortunate scenario. I fear—and it could just be sloth, laziness on the part of us here not wanting to embark on that rather arduous exercise of setting up and sitting through interviews and having bureaucratic staff vet people. It could be sloth; I'm not sure. It could be eagerness on the part of some to reward what have been good performances. In the case of Ms. Cavoukian, I can understand that motivation. She has performed well; I don't hesitate in saying that. I've had occasion in this House, as a matter of fact, to express gratitude for her on at least one very significant occasion.

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But I say it's wrong for us, for such an important role, to simply reappoint, especially after a person has performed their second term, without looking around us and seeing whether there are other people in our community—our provincial, our national, our international community—who may serve that role equally well and maybe with an entirely different perspective.

Look at what's happened in the Ombudsman's office. We've had stellar Ombudsmen from the very get-go. Although not here when the first Ombudsman was appointed, I was watching that with great interest.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Arthur Maloney.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Former Conservative Arthur Maloney, that's right. As a matter of fact, I watched Arthur Maloney the first time, when he was doing the inquiry into police brutality here in the city of Toronto. I was a student over at York University and I remember coming downtown here to watch Maloney as he was doing that inquiry. It was one of the first times—talk about a gutsy, gutsy, integrous person—that sort of inquiry had ever taken place in a public venue with such zeal, without the police automatically being presumed to be truthful as compared to the non-truthfulness of every complainant. So as I say, I watched Maloney and, my goodness, Clare Lewis, who I was a fan of, again, from many years ago as a very young lawyer.

But I also watched the nature of that office change and transform as each new Ombudsman was appointed, and it was a healthy thing. We now have André Marin, who has brought an exciting new face to that office, and who has left government members shaking their heads in dismay that an Ombudsman could be that zealous in the performance of his role.

Interjection.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Mr. Smitherman responds. It was a modest interjection, and I'm not sure Hansard picked it up. It might best be recorded as a mutter, an incoherent mutter.

So here we are; we have an opportunity now to look around us and see whether there's another person who can perform this role. Ms. Cavoukian may well win in a competition, but in the absence of that process and competition, we are not supporting this motion today.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Ms. Smith has moved government notice of motion number 136. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it. Carried.

Motion agreed to.

MINING AMENDMENT ACT, 2009

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Resuming the debate adjourned on May 26, 2009, on the motion for second reading of Bill 173, An Act to amend the Mining Act.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mr. John O'Toole: Mr. Speaker, with your indulgence, I'll take a couple of minutes to find my notes on Bill 173. They have been deliberately considered and prepared. With that, I did ask for the opportunity to speak to that, and I'm just in the midst of turning off my electronic device. Very good.

Bill 173, the Mining Act, is an amendment to the existing legislation. Apparently it has been a long time

since this legislation has been reviewed, and I think it's a timely opportunity to review the legislation. Just to sort of familiarize yourself, I know our critic, Mr. Miller, from Parry Sound—Muskoka, was very eloquent in his remarks, as was the member from Haldimand—Norfolk, who spoke last on this. On May 13, the member from Algoma—Manitoulin spoke very well and was here to listen, and I appreciated his remarks.

If you look at the purpose clause, that's probably the best place to start in this bill. There's probably going to be, I would suggest, more hearings. Certainly, my concerns are that the mining association and others want to make sure that the regulations that will be attached to this bill are done on a consulted basis.

The whole process here is about finding a balance. We all know that the resources of Ontario are basically the collective wealth of Ontario. And what I mean by the collective wealth is all of the gold, silver and other resources that are in the ground, and on top of the ground, in fact—the forestry industry. All of those resources, those natural, wonderful and beautiful things that are in our province, including the water and the air, are kind of attached to the quality of life that we've become accustomed to and are the custodians of.

The First Nations people of Ontario want to be consulted and, I guess, to some extent have been consulted, to make sure we get this particular legislation, Bill 173, right. When I say "get it right," this is where the devil is in the details, if I could use that expression. The consultations which led to this, it's my understanding, was through the mining association, First Nations organizations and community leaders.

Really, what you want in this kind of investors was the shareholders themselves—or the mining companies, the exploration companies, and the prospectors and others. All of the stakeholders in this have a different perspective of, if you will, to be really crude, how we get to harvest these resources—"harvest" is a bit of a rough word—and leave the area that we are mining or excavating etc. in as great a condition, as healthy a condition as possible.

All of these things are to find stable investment agreements. It sounds a bit commercial to say that, but investors, whether it's a pension fund that is investing in a diamond mine, or whether it's some other pension fund or a pool of capital that's looking for a good home—there's a lot of money invested in these operations and usually, but not always, a lot of money is made.

Mining stocks were always touted to be one of the higher-risk stocks, because you've got to put a lot of capital investment in before you get five cents out. So you need a stable, clear set of rules for all of the stakeholders. That's very, very important.

The stakeholders here become the most important discussion point, the stakeholders being the landowners. I think there's a really important consideration in this legislation on the property rights issue. There are some clarifications on the property rights, and that's very important.

First, I just want to put on the record this memo that I received from the Ontario Real Estate Association, and

I'm going to read what they say: "May 7.... Proposed changes to the Ontario Mining Act will strengthen property rights in Ontario," says the Ontario Real Estate Association (OREA). The government of Ontario introduced Bill 173, the Mining Act Amendment Act, 2009, in the Ontario Legislature last week after "lengthy consultations—pretty much everything I've said.

"The government of Ontario took the time to get Bill 173 right," said OREA president Pauline Auger. "The proposed changes to the Mining Act are important steps towards stronger, better-defined property rights in our province." It's a quote.

Here are some subtle differences, and I think this is very important to see, when you get into the detail of the legislation, how important the strong words and clarity are for all of the stakeholders, whether it's the prospector or the property owner: "Ontario's realtors are especially encouraged that lands in southern Ontario, where there is a surface rights owner and the mining rights belong to the crown"—that's very important; it's a subtle, micro-level detail there; the resource rights really belong to the crown—"are deemed to be withdrawn from prospecting, staking, sale and lease if the bill becomes law." That's very important. In fact, it's worth repeating. If you look at southern Ontario, that would include my riding of Durham; it would include pretty well everything south of North Bay, really. "[L]ands in southern Ontario, where there is a surface rights owner"—that's me, my property; could be a farmer, could be a large landowner, could be the crown itself that owns that greenbelt area, but here's the key—"and the mining rights belong to the crown, are deemed to be withdrawn from prospecting, staking, sale and lease if the bill becomes law."

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It goes on to say, "Bill 173 reflects the realities of Ontario in the 21st century," explained Ms. Auger. "Home and cottage owners in southern Ontario should be pleased to hear that their property is no [longer] subject to prospecting and mining."

This is what we have been hearing about, with the important growth in the nuclear industry: the need to have uranium resources available. They are available in Ontario, and yet there was kind of a rash of prospecting going on, which is a whole issue of how property rights can be impacted without the property owner even being consulted.

"For property owners in northern Ontario, Bill 173 puts restrictions on the types of property that prospectors can enter without permission from the landowner. It also approves the use of map staking." It's very important, map staking, with land formations, geological formations, satellite tracking and coordinates etc. It's quite possible, in the modelling of land formations and potential resources beneath the surface, that a lot of it can be done remotely, through what we would call map staking.

"The new Mining Act encourages more consultation and dialogue between landowners and prospectors.... Traditional methods of prospecting are often destructive to private property. Map staking removes the need to cut

down trees, knock down fences or excavate land when a prospector stakes a claim."

OREA represents 47,000 brokers and salespersons and 42 boards, and it's important—that's just one of the stakeholders, and there are many more as well that have been consulted.

I'm just going to read a couple of these into the record. I think it's important that we, first of all, understand that the opposition, the PC Party under Bob Runciman—or whoever, one of the other four people who are running for leader—would be in support of having a strong economy in Ontario, because the fundamentals of the resources, which are the collective wealth of Ontario, are the current and future wealth and well-being, the standard of living, in the province of Ontario. We would be in support of having reasonable and fair rules so that there is one set of rules and laws and so that we can move forward for the common good of the people of Ontario. That's really, ultimately, what this bill is about.

It has a lot of detail, as I said before; an awful lot of detail. I would say even myself, just to be a modest person, when I first started to take the securities courses in Ontario, I did invest in some of the resource stocks. Right now, in the current economy, if you look at the market itself, I would suspect that one of the safest—if that's the proper word, I suppose—investments today would be in the resources sector. You can invest directly in the commodity itself, either gold or silver or diamonds, or you can invest in a company that's an exploration company or a mining company itself. I think, ultimately, these are rare commodities. As I said before, I became quite interested in the resource sector from that point of view, whether it's oil or gold or other kinds of resources. Again, "buyer beware" is the best way to look at it.

I'm going to go on here and say that the "purpose" clause of the Mining Act is amended to include the statement that mining activities are encouraged "in a manner consistent with the recognition and affirmation of existing aboriginal and treaty rights." This is where you start to get into the—pardon me; I was going to get into the treaty rights. Do you have that treaty right? I'd like to make a reference to it. I think that's very, very important, because the long-standing debate has really been about the rights of the aboriginal people. You've got to go back to the rule of law. Their law, of course, I believe, should be and must be respected in our law. That's where the two conflicting objectives bump into each other.

I'm just going to spend most of the time now on that, the reasonableness and importance of consultation. I think the government has that right. They've set apart from this bill, Bill 173, I think, a \$30-million fund to resolve issues with claims. We saw the important agreement when they had the diamond mine—De Beers, I think it was—in northern Ontario, near Timmins. The diamond mine and the consultation in the development of that mine were worked out within the contract that was signed with the mining company and the rightful owners of the property, the First Nations groups—some agreements. Those agreements have employment and training.

I'm not sure if there is any resource sharing, meaning money sharing, but there's probably some royalty sharing. I think that's important. But here's what's important: When you look at a raw piece of land that may or may not have resources on it or below it—here is a good example of the work done by our member from Haldimand-Norfolk, who takes great interest in the fairness argument for First Nations people. Here's what he has provided me with just this moment, which I heard him read the other day. Here is what was agreed to in the Robinson-Huron Treaty of 1850. I'm going to read this verbatim. It's like a legal document.

"They the said chiefs and principal men, on behalf of their respective tribes or bands, do hereby fully, freely and voluntarily surrender, cede, grant and convey unto Her Majesty, her heirs and successors for ever, all their right, title and interest to, and in the whole of, the territory above described, save and except the reservations set forth in the schedule here unto annexed.

"And further, to allow the said chiefs and their tribes the full and free privilege to hunt over the territory now ceded by them, and to fish in their waters thereof, as they have heretofore been in the habit of doing, saving and excepting such portions of the said territory as may from time to time, be sold or leased to individuals or companies of individuals, and occupied by them with the consent of the provincial government." You'd need to get a bit of a cobweb untangler to actually interpret those particular treaties.

James Bay Treaty number 9 is another case. I think it's worth putting this on the record because I believe that these agreements must be respected and worked out. It reads as follows—this is James Bay Treaty number 9:

"Whereas the said commissioners have proceeded to negotiate a treaty with the Ojibwa, Cree and other Indians inhabiting the district hereinafter defined and described, and the same has being agreed upon, and concluded by the respective bands at the date mentioned hereunder, the said Indians do hereby cede, release, surrender and yield up to the government of the Dominion of Canada, for His Majesty the King and his successors for ever, all their rights, titles and privileges whatsoever to the lands included....

"And His Majesty the King hereby agrees with the said Indians that they shall have the right to pursue their usual vocations of hunting, trapping and fishing throughout the tract surrendered as heretofore described, subject to such regulations as may from time to time be made by the government of the country, acting under the authority of His Majesty, and saving and excepting such tracts as may be required or taken up from time to time for settlement, mining, lumbering, trading or other purposes."

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They go on, and I guess the point is that these are legal documents. My own humble interpretation is that these laws and languages of the law in themselves were foreign to First Nations, the aboriginal people. As such, they were being almost coerced into making agreements in a language unfamiliar to them and customs unfamiliar to

them. That may not be the case today, but they may indeed still be unfamiliar to them, because they don't own property individually; they own it in common. These are the issues that I have great appreciation for.

You can talk about this bill, Bill 173, which I'm doing. This bill is about 48 pages, and of that it's half French, so it's about 25 pages long. It amends a number of acts—in fact, it amends, I believe, five different acts—and it covers two or three different ministries. Here's the issue: The money made from the property that's held in common or under the name of the crown is money to be shared by all the people for all the purposes of the province of Ontario—health care, education, a justice system available to all of us. It's the duty of the government and, in our case, the Premier of Ontario, in the rights and authorities bestowed upon them constitutionally—which is the law we all obey regardless of our country of origin. I suspect that's the real argument at the end of the day here. The real discussion is, who owns the land, who owns the gold and who gets to share in it? I think we own these things in common, and there are rules and laws that we all must abide by. That may be an oversimplification, but I think this bill sets about the right balance for the right purposes.

I'm just going to conclude, in the last few minutes I have: "Aboriginal consultation would be required for exploration plans and permits for exploration activity, proportionate to the potential impact of the proposed activities." Later-stage "activities such as advanced exploration and mine development already require aboriginal consultation, through closure plan requirements in the regulations. The bill would make more express reference to aboriginal consultation requirements for closure plans in the act. In making decisions under the act that require consideration of consultation that has occurred, the proposed amendments signal that regard will be had to arrangements made between project proponents and potentially affected aboriginal communities." Really, what they're saying here is, in every instance, consultation with the aboriginals, if that is the case, must be adhered to in point. How the resources are shared I'm sure will be worked out in individual cases.

"Amendments are proposed with respect to oil, gas and salt solution mining in part IV of the act, which is administered by the Ministry of Natural Resources," and amendments remove the geographical restrictions of part IV applied province-wide. The duties and powers of inspectors are expanded, including the power to, without a warrant, at any reasonable time, gather information and make inspections as required.

Often I'm finding that a lot of the legislation now under the McGuinty government is kind of skipping over this—without a warrant, you can enter a premises. I start to get troubled with that, whether it's the First Nations or just me at my property.

So there are things here that I want to find the balance to, to get it right. This is a resource issue. We need to work together and make sure that we're being fair with all of the stakeholders.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments? Further debate.

Mr. Toby Barrett: I have questions and comments.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): I'm sorry; I was looking the other way. The member for Haldimand-Norfolk.

Mr. Toby Barrett: And I'm sure there are other comments in abeyance here.

I appreciate the presentation by the member from Durham. He raises the issue of native treaty history and treaty rights and some of the widespread misconceptions with respect to that. It ties in very closely with the issue of consultation and the duty to consult, which is quite a burning issue with municipalities, certainly along the Grand River. I'm afraid a lot of this is not as clear-cut with respect to this mining legislation as some of the media may leave us to believe.

I referred in earlier debate to correspondence from a concerned prospector, some of his concerns. He sent me an e-mail on May 21. I think everybody received this e-mail: "Did I read the act properly (86.1), in that natives are given the right to veto everything and seize property?" I think of the Platinex issue with KI, and apparently that is an ongoing issue. He goes on to say, "This includes staking, exploring and accessing all mining lands, which includes private property related to mining. This is how the act reads. Will there be any compensation or appeal process? Because the way it reads is, if the natives say no, we have to walk away."

There are similar sentiments that have come forward from the Prospectors and Developers Association of Canada. In their EBR submission they ask for clarity on the issues of consultation and accommodation and they point out the failure of the provincial government to provide the necessary leadership, which can lead to distrust between aboriginal communities and mineral explorers.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. John Yakabuski: I don't know that I'm going to have an opportunity to speak to this bill, so I'm going to try in two minutes to get it all in, and I know that's difficult.

The government was encouraged to make changes to the Mining Act because there were some significant issues out there. I would say that on balance not everything is perfect, but in general, I think they've done a pretty positive thing here, certainly for the concerns that were registered in ridings like mine, in Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke, and by people in southern Ontario.

We were very concerned about the prospecting of land in southern Ontario with respect to looking for possible subsurface minerals and upsetting property owners who had no idea, quite frankly, that they didn't own the mineral rights. So the provision that mineral rights that are not already under claim would then be ceded to the crown and that the crown would have the subsurface mineral rights, I think, is a positive thing. Of course, the property owners can still apply for those subsurface rights, but prospectors on small tracts of private property

in southern Ontario will not be able to simply go in there and cause the kind of havoc that was happening over the last couple of years. So for people in my area of the province, that's a positive thing for sure, that they can rest assured that their properties are not going to be disturbed in a fashion that they had no understanding they could ever be. So I like that part of it in general.

The act addresses that issue and a number of others. There are issues that maybe aren't properly addressed in it, but that's not what I'm going to be talking about today. I simply want to say, I appreciate what they have done to deal with the problems of property rights in southern Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and commons? The member for Durham, you have two minutes to respond.

Mr. John O'Toole: I do appreciate the comments from the member for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke, and I do hope he gets more time to speak on this and add his comments from his constituents. As well, the member for Haldimand-Norfolk has been very committed to this legislation and getting it right.

I just want to make observations: There were no government members who made any comments during that period, which means maybe they figure it's okay; I don't know. But I do take note that the Minister of Northern Development and Mines is here, Mr. Gravelle, and I have listened to his comments. I believe the consultations will continue with public hearings—it's my understanding—and that's important.

I think we're really just trying to say that these are resource issues. This is the wealth of Ontario. They are issues that are held in common by the people of Ontario. All of us, from every region of the province, enjoy the health care and the education and the justice system and the highways. The Minister of Transportation is here as well. So these are things that we share in common, and the resources, basically, somewhere or other, are our wealth held in common. We need to get this right. We want to make sure that the exploration and development is done in harmony with the environment and our economy, and that would include First Nations as well as people living in condos in Toronto. We're all in it together.

My understanding is that the mining association wants to make sure that the consultations on the regulations are open. There's no such thing as perfection; this is on earth, of course.

At the end of the day, investors need certainty to make those kinds of commitments and they need the opportunity, with risk, to have reward. "No pain, no gain," is the market's old expression. I suspect for landowners like myself—if there was value under my property, somebody has to invest the money to get it, and it's up to the investor to make that decision.

I wish the minister well in—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Thank you. Further debate? Does any other member wish to speak?

Mr. Gravelle has moved second reading of Bill 173. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."
 All those opposed, say "nay."
 In my opinion, the ayes have it.
 Call in the members—

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): All right. Pursuant to the standing orders, this vote will be deferred until after question period.

Second reading vote deferred.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Orders of the day?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: We have no further government business this morning.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): There being no further business, this House stands in recess until 10:30 of the clock.

The House recessed from 0952 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. David Zimmer: It is my pleasure to introduce Caroline MacIsaac-Power, who is the registrar of the College of Opticians and the president-elect of CLEAR. CLEAR stands for Council on Licensure, Enforcement and Regulation; it's an international body for the professional regulatory organizations. This is the first time that a Canadian has been elected president of CLEAR. It is a very distinguished body. She will take office in Denver, Colorado, in December 2009.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: It's a great pleasure to introduce three of the greatest ladies in Ontario, who are visiting us here today: Susan, Anika and Freya Hardeman. The reason that they're here is that Freya and Anika are here to have lunch with their grandfather, who represents the great riding of Oxford county in the province of Ontario.

Hon. John Wilkinson: I want to welcome the students from Arthur Public School who are here today. Particularly, I know that one of their alumni, my good friend the member from Wellington-Halton Hills, Mr. Arnott, is proud to have graduated from Arthur Public School. We're both very proud that they're here today.

Mr. John O'Toole: I'd like to recognize one of my famous constituents, Jim McMillen, who is actually president of the CNE board, celebrating here today. He's also a regional councillor from the municipality of Scugog on the region of Durham council. Welcome to the Legislature.

Mr. Paul Miller: I would like to welcome to Queen's Park Hamilton East-Stoney Creek page Kerala Brendon's family: her parents, Brenda and David Brendon; and her grandparents, Joan Brendon and John and Evelyn Hough. Welcome.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I'd like to welcome David Bednar, who's the general manager of the Canadian National Exhibition, and Jim McMillen, who has already been introduced, the president. The CNE opens this year

on August 21, and I know that everyone is going to join us. Let's go to the Ex.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Visiting Queen's Park today, we have guests from the Canadian Hearing Society, who are here for an all-party hearing-access awareness reception to celebrate May as Hearing Awareness Month. The reception is happening this evening in room 228. We welcome them.

Mr. Mario Sergio: Page Alexander Singh is from my riding, which is an honour. I wish him well in his stay here at Queen's Park, and I'm looking forward to a wonderful lunch with page Alexander Singh today. Again, I welcome him in Parliament here.

ORAL QUESTIONS

TVONTARIO

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: My question is for the Premier. Given the rhetoric we hear in this place on a daily basis, we have to assume the Premier appreciates the financial challenges facing the province. His government is running a record deficit and thousands of Ontarians have lost their jobs. Premier, in this economic climate—

Interjections.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: I guess the idea of a deficit is a joke to most of the folks sitting over there—a record deficit.

Premier, in this economic climate, how can you allow a downsized government agency, TVO, to increase the number of staff earning over \$100,000 a year by 30%?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Let me just say at the outset that we are very much seized of the magnitude of the financial challenges before us, just as Ontario families are making adjustments, just as our businesses are making adjustments. We will do everything we can to reflect those concerns and to give expression to Ontario values. Obviously, they want us to act responsibly. They want us to manage our finances in a way that's in keeping with what they would have us do. I think we've demonstrated that on a number of fronts in terms of the constraints that we have put in place and in terms of the budget that we recently presented in this Legislature. I look forward to hearing a few more details from my colleague in the supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: The only adjustment at TVO has been upward. There's a good column in the Toronto Sun today about the Premier and his colleagues trying to distance themselves from decisions and responsibilities they have as a government.

The overburdened taxpayers of the province feed TVO approximately \$45 million a year—tax dollars. TVO's answer to the financial challenges of the province was to close its Queen's Park bureau while keeping its Parliament Hill office open and to dramatically increase the

salaries of fat-cat executives. The CEO, who is your political appointee, Premier, makes more than double the salary of her predecessor. Premier, do you take any responsibility for this agency's abuse of hard-earned tax dollars?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Education.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I just want to say off the top that I and this government have every confidence in Lisa de Wilde as the CEO of TVO. She has done a fantastic job. Under her watch, 85% of Ontarians tuned in to TVO last season. That's over 10 million people aged two and up. The point is that TVO is providing a service across this province to some of our youngest citizens. They're providing a non-commercial, educational experience of television, and that is incredibly valuable.

Ontarians pay less than \$3 a person per annum for TVO. In terms of value for money, we are getting very, very great service.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: To be polite, that response was what could be described as abuse of the airwaves. There was nothing there to deal with the issue related to the fat-cat salaries at TVO. These are tax dollars we're talking about, Minister. Why are they getting these fat-cat increases while the rest of Ontarians are suffering and struggling to make ends meet, while you're taxing them to death? In fact, you're even taxing them at death.

I think that you have some responsibility here. Private broadcasters are downsizing. We see what's happening at the gallery here at Queen's Park. But here, your agency, funded by taxpayers' dollars, is increasing by 30% the number of staff earning over \$100,000 a year. Minister, you have a responsibility. You have a fiduciary responsibility to the taxpayers of this province. Stand up and justify that, or take action to remedy it.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The way that this can be justified is that this public broadcaster, TVO, is providing an educational service across this province, whether we're talking about the news analysis that is delivered through programs like *The Agenda* or whether we're talking about the educational programming that is provided to our young people or the independent learning service that allows people from around the province, adult learners, to upgrade, to get credits that they haven't been able to get otherwise.

The salary that is paid to the CEO is part of the overall cost of TVO, which is, as I said, \$3 per citizen for the cost of TVO to Ontario. I think that for value for service, dollar for dollar, Ontarians are getting a very good service through TVO.

TAXATION

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: That's a familiar scenario: Protect Liberals at all costs—in this case, \$44 million of taxpayers' money.

Back to the Premier: Premier, as more and more Ontarians become aware of the implications of the new McGuinty sales tax, concern is growing. That's reflected in recent public opinion polls showing that almost 70% of Ontarians oppose this new Liberal tax grab, Premier.

You're the man bringing in this massive and wide-reaching tax; you should know what the impacts are on hard-working Ontarians. Premier, can you advise us—my colleague asked you this earlier this week, and we'll try it again—of the impact your new tax will have on common fees and other expenses for people owning and renting condominiums?

1040

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: What we can say is that overall, 93% of Ontarians will experience a tax cut. The member simply cannot ignore the entire tax package. We have personal tax cuts; we have corporate tax cuts; we have tax cuts that will see that 93% of Ontarians will see a decrease in their taxes.

These are difficult and challenging times, and as the member opposite expressed the day after the budget, he and his party do support this in principle. In times like this, it is incumbent on governments to take the kinds of decisions we're taking. In the short and long term, our economy will be more competitive. Ontarians will see: When the world economy begins to pick up, Ontario will be bigger, better and stronger and better prepared to benefit from a growing world economy.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: The Premier should be embarrassed. He can't or won't answer questions about abuse of taxpayers' dollars. He can't or won't answer questions about specific impacts of this new massive tax he's imposing on Ontarians.

I want to ask the minister—we have to go back to him, clearly; the Premier is not going to answer this: Why do you and your sheep-like backbenchers who won't stand up for their constituents think it's just fine and dandy to tax funerals, including prepaid funerals? Apparently, you're even contemplating applying this tax retroactively.

Minister, in light of your Premier not being aware of the impacts, can you try to tell us what impact this new tax on funerals, prepaid funerals as well, will have on the average cost of a funeral in this province?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: What I can say is that in terms of prepaid funerals it is our intention that they will not be affected by the tax, subject to concurrence by the federal government through the Canada Revenue Agency on the transition rules.

The Premier of Ontario has laid out a plan to get this economy moving. He has laid out a plan that cuts taxes for individuals, cuts taxes for small businesses and cuts taxes for large businesses. Most importantly, the compassion side is part of that budget, too, to help low-income Ontarians through these difficult times, to make our system fairer and better, to invest in health care and invest in Ontario.

The member in the House who doesn't seem to be consistent in his view is the member who asked the question, who said on March 24, "I think ... our party is supportive of harmonization." What has happened? What has happened—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Final supplementary.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: I don't think we've heard any answers to specific questions related to the impacts of this new tax. When you have a government responsible for the largest tax increase in the province's history that cannot get up and answer specific questions about impacts, that is shameful. That is indeed shameful. There's no question about it.

I'll ask you another specific question. I had a letter from a lady in my riding about small organizations—

Interjections.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: This is a big joke to them. Billions and billions of tax dollars being imposed on the shoulders of struggling Ontarians, and all that crowd over there can do is laugh about it. They should be ashamed. They don't have any answers; they don't know what the impacts are going to be. They are a shameful bunch, and their backbenchers are a bunch of yellow—

Interjections.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: —whatever—who will not stand up for their constituents.

Let's talk about the non-profit sector here—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Minister?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: What's unfortunate is that the member would characterize an enormous tax cut as a tax increase. That's unfortunate.

To be specific, yes, the tax will apply to some things that aren't covered, and everybody knows that; it's well understood. But I think most Ontarians are looking to governments to take decisive steps to make sure that our tax system is the most competitive in the world. That's why Mr. Flaherty and the federal government have been so supportive of this. That's why the C.D. Howe Institute, the Toronto-Dominion Bank, a range of social groups, have been so supportive of this.

Is it a difficult decision? Yes, it is. That's what leadership is about; that's what Premier McGuinty is about.

This is the right policy for Ontario, for our future, for jobs, for all Ontarians—a tax cut that everyone will—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

GASOLINE PRICES

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Premier. Gas prices are surging across Ontario. In the last week alone, prices at the pump have shot up by 4.7 cents a litre in Thunder Bay, 3.5 cents a litre in Toronto, 3.2 cents a litre in Ottawa, and 1.5 cents a litre in Windsor. For many Ontario families, there is no choice but to drive to work and drive the kids to soccer and to Little League throughout the summer. The McGuinty Liberals' HST plan will tack 8% more on to the price of gas, amplifying

these gas pump shocks. Why is the Premier raising the price at the pump?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I appreciate the question.

Again, I think it's important to take a step back and take a look at the entirety of the proposal that we've put before the people of Ontario. The comprehensiveness of our plan, when it comes to what's going to happen to families—to state again what the Minister of Finance just did: 93% of Ontarians will get a permanent income tax cut. We're also making sure that the single sales tax does not apply to items that are especially important to our families, like diapers, children's clothing, infant car seats and books.

We also know that one of the most important demands of our families is to make sure that there are enough jobs there for mums and dads, and later on for their kids. They want us to make sure that our economy is competitive with those around the world. One hundred and thirty other countries already give their businesses the advantages that they enjoy in a harmonized sales tax system—a single sales tax. We need to get there in Ontario, and that's what we're doing.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: After a five-cent increase last week, it's now \$1.02 to fill up a car on the way to work in Sault Ste. Marie or Sudbury. The 8% tax hike is going to push the price up to about \$1.10 a litre. That adds up quickly, especially for many Ontario families who are seeing joblessness, fewer hours at work or lower pay.

Why is the Premier raising the tax on gas at the pump, and does the Premier really believe that this is the time to be hitting consumers with higher costs?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, just so my colleague can help spread this message on our behalf, this doesn't take effect until July 1 of next year. It is accompanied by 93% of Ontarians enjoying an income tax cut. It is accompanied by businesses, both small and large, enjoying reductions in their costs.

It does put us on a more competitive footing. Our manufacturing and forestry sectors in particular, which are struggling with the cost of their exports—this will reduce those costs, which will make them more competitive so they can create more jobs, so more mums and dads can get work and support their families. I know that my colleague would support that.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: It's not just gas at the pump; it's heating oil and it's even propane. The summer barbecue is going to be more expensive because of the HST. The average Ontario family is going to be hammered with \$330 more just for home heating and utility costs.

Why won't this Premier admit that the HST will make life harder for Ontarians?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, my colleague is just looking at one particular measure, and she has yet to factor into her thinking the fact that 93% of Ontarians will enjoy a tax cut. I don't think she has looked at the other dimensions of our budget; for example, dramatic-

ally increasing the Ontario child benefit for kids who are growing up in poverty, building more affordable housing, investing in better-quality health care services for all our families, investing in better educational opportunities for all our children.

Here's something that came from Adam Spence who's with the Ontario Association of Food Banks: "I think this government took important steps in this budget. It's going to put money in people's pockets and a roof over their heads."

Again, we have tried to be thoughtful and balanced to build a more competitive and a more caring Ontario.

1050

PENSION PLANS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also to the Premier. Under a deal worked out between GM and the CAW, workers made extraordinary sacrifices to maintain the company's viability. Pension benefits are going to be frozen at current rates until 2015 and new GM hires will contribute \$1 an hour towards the pension plan for the first time in CAW history. Finally, each worker is going to have to divert a \$3,500 lump sum vacation clawback payment towards the pension plan.

In light of these extraordinary concessions by GM workers, will this government ensure that the financial assistance package negotiated with GM includes ironclad guarantees that the workers get every last pension penny that's owed to them?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: First of all, I want to support the sentiment expressed by my colleague. The CAW has done something absolutely remarkable: In the last year alone, they've negotiated three separate collective agreements with GM, and they've made significant concessions every time. I understand that, I recognize that and I respect that.

Now, in fairness to Ontario taxpayers, they're also being called upon to make significant concessions as well—not to put more money into their hospitals or health care but to put more money in a private sector venture, General Motors of Canada. We think we have a responsibility to do that. That's why we've remained at the table. We're working with the federal government and the government in Washington to see what we can do to put GM on a sound footing. Those negotiations are continuing.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I'm asking a very, very specific question here. There's confusion over what role this government is playing to ensure that GM pensions are protected. One day the Premier says the province won't contribute financially to protect pensions, and the next day he hints that the province may contribute to the solvency of the plan.

My question is, which is it? In return for a \$2-billion investment from Ontario taxpayers, will this government insist on ironclad guarantees that GM will adequately fund its pension plan?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I think what I said was that there's no money to put into the pension benefits guarantee fund. I think I also said that we have both a political and a moral responsibility to help out employees, including pensioners with GM. I think I've said that in the past.

There are some legacy costs that remain very real for General Motors, and unless there is a way found to address those, including pension issues, then GM will not survive. It's as simple as that. That would mean that the single most important employer in Oshawa, Ingersoll and St. Catharines would go under. It would mean that parts suppliers from Belleville to Barrie to Windsor would be affected.

So what's at stake is a great deal, and that's why we're continuing these negotiations in earnest. We're doing everything we can to come to some accommodation that respects the interests of the pensioners, taxpayers, General Motors and Ontarians in a stronger auto sector in our province.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Here's what New Democrats believe: Before one more taxpayer penny flows to GM, there needs to be an ironclad guarantee forcing GM to adequately fund its pension plan. Workers didn't cause the problem. I would agree with the Premier there, but they've agreed to play their own part and keep that plant solvent. Taxpayers didn't cause the problem at GM, but they are being asked to fork over billions of dollars to keep that company alive.

It's a very simple question: Will there be ironclad guarantees written into any financial agreement between the province and GM to ensure the company meets all of its pension obligations?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: We've always maintained that the best way to protect pensioners and pensions is to rescue General Motors and put it on a solid footing, and that remains our principal objective.

When it comes to guarantees, the single most significant guarantee that we are looking for here is a guarantee of production. We want to maintain production levels in the province of Ontario. What that translates into in terms of job numbers is difficult to say, but that's our foothold. We want to preserve that capacity because that's something on which we can build going forward.

I know that my colleague has a sincere interest in these matters. What I can tell her is that we remain at the table. We're working diligently, and I remain confident that we'll come to some accommodation that will respect the interests of taxpayers, workers and pensioners at GM.

SCHOOL TRANSPORTATION FUNDING

Mr. Ted Arnott: My question is for the Minister of Education. Will the minister inform the House what she thinks is a reasonable walking distance for students to walk to school in communities where neither busing or public transit is available?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know the member opposite is referring to decisions that are being made in local communities about transportation that is offered to students. What we have to do in every board around the community is look at the particular circumstances, the particular geography. I know that in the member's riding there is a discussion between the community and the board at the moment because some of the rules are being changed around who can be picked up and who cannot be picked up.

What we know is that transportation consortia have been formed in boards around the province to maximize the opportunities for kids to get busing, but at the same time to make those routes the most efficient and effective possible. So I'm going to leave those decisions to the local boards and to the transportation consortia because they are the ones who know the community and they are the ones that can provide the services to the students.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Ted Arnott: The parents know the community too. I'm going to have to get three pages to deliver the letters over to the minister here. Thank you very much.

There are over 1,000 letters, all from families in Georgetown with students facing long walks of up to two hours per day. They have no public transit option. Despite what the minister would lead us to believe, this problem did not originate with the school board. It originated in the Mowat Block in the minister's office. I warned the minister about this problem over two months ago and have written and spoken to her on many other occasions. I've told her that our school board needed prompt reassurance that their bus funding would not be cut if they continued to bus students from Georgetown South.

Having failed to do so, will she at least meet in person with the mayor of Halton Hills, which she so far has declined to do?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The member opposite a couple of days ago showed me these letters and I said I was happy to take them to my office and to make response to the board, and I am happy to do that. My ministry officials have been in conversation with the officials at the board.

The fact is that the board is in the process of changing some of the consortia, in the process of changing some of the rules. When sometimes there was what is called courtesy busing, when students who are actually outside the walking area were getting transportation, now the board is saying, "You know what? We have to make sure that all the kids who are being bused to the school fall within the distances." At some point boards have to say, "These are the distances within which we'll bus, and outside of those distances, we are not going to be busing kids to school." That's happening in every board around the province. It's only rational that there would be those kinds of limits.

I'm absolutely open to speaking to anyone who has a concern.

GO TRANSIT

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My question is for the Premier. Today we're reading about yet another study about whether to electrify GO Transit lines. It doesn't take another study to tell you that electrifying GO Transit lines is good for the air, good for the economy and good for the people who live near those lines.

More than eight years ago the Toronto Board of Trade called for electrification of those lines. Two years ago this government committed to electrifying the Lake Shore GO line. Instead of waiting for another report, why don't you simply proceed to electrify the GO network—proceed now?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Transportation.

Hon. James J. Bradley: As the member would know, the Metrolinx organization, which deals with these matters, has made a decision to indicate that it would be involved in a study of electrification of the lines that he's making reference to and that it would be a very extensive study to determine what the needs would be, for instance, and what the priorities would be in terms of that particular study and to involve as wide a group as possible in that study to determine the timetable for moving forward with projects, what exactly would be implied by having electrification in terms of what new lines would have to go in, what new stations would have to be put up in terms of electrification of stations. They want to do a very thorough job on that, and I think the member—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

1100

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I appreciate the skill of the minister in circling around an answer, but what I want to go to is this: Minister, you know that we need to have electrification of these lines. You know that on the Georgetown line, there are hundreds of thousands of residents and thousands of children who want a network that will be clean and that will not contribute to pollution in their area. They are ready for electrification. You're in a position to move that forward. Why are you dragging your feet and why are Metrolinx and GO dragging their feet? Why don't you tell them to proceed with the planning for installation and get it happening now?

Hon. James J. Bradley: If I can identify one portion of that, and I want to make sure that I identify that one portion, the member asked why I don't get started with the planning immediately. That's exactly what's happening by having this study: getting involved with the planning immediately.

The Georgetown South service expansion includes an air-rail link, as you know, from Union Station to Pearson. It's a priority in the Metrolinx regional plan. I understand that Metrolinx is taking extra care on the Georgetown line expansion, for instance, to make sure it will be capable of supporting the electrification of this line in the future.

All structures, bridges, grade separations and so on will be designed and constructed to meet the greater

height requirements for electrification. Track spacing is being designed to allow for the foundations and columns required, and signal systems are being upgraded to allow for an electrified train system.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Mrs. Laura Albanese: My question is for the Minister of Transportation. On a number of occasions I have brought attention to the concerns raised by my constituents of York South–Weston in regard to the Georgetown South GO expansion. This project includes an air-rail link from Union Station to Pearson airport, which is currently undergoing an environmental assessment which will conclude in the fall. The proposal put forward by Metrolinx includes a stop and a new GO station facility in Weston, plus tunnelling the air-rail link and GO trains through Weston. This is a great improvement from the original project proposal, and I would like to thank the minister for sharing new, exciting news with us today in respect with the electrification of the Georgetown line, which many of my constituents have been calling for.

My understanding is that these studies are necessary to move forward. Both Metrolinx and the minister have heard the residents of York South–Weston in the past, and have responded—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Minister?

Hon. James J. Bradley: One of my colleagues reminds me that we already are in the process of spending \$7 billion on electrification in Toronto at the present time. I know that the member for York South–Weston has been a tireless advocate in this regard.

The Georgetown South service expansion, including an air-rail link, is a priority of the Metrolinx regional transportation plan, a plan that was unanimously adopted by the entire Metrolinx board.

Metrolinx recognizes the desire of those living along the Georgetown corridor to see electric trains running on their line as soon as possible. This is a desire shared with those living along GO Transit's rail corridors throughout the greater Toronto area and Hamilton. That is why the regional transportation plan also recommends express rail service throughout the GTHA, for which electrification is a key element. Metrolinx is conducting that study at the present time, and the member is right—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I look forward to forwarding this information to my constituents. I have spoken with experts in the field, many of those who, in fact, are working on this particular project, and I understand that the process of electrifying a rail corridor is an extensive one. This study sounds like an important first step in the right direction.

I am hoping that the Minister of Transportation would tell us more about the study that Metrolinx has commissioned so that I can share this information with those in my riding—specifically, what the study will entail, the

time lines of the study and how it will affect the Georgetown corridor and air-rail link. The residents of York South–Weston look forward to electric train technology as part of Ontario's plan to increase transit use in the coming years.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I understand that an external advisory committee will be established to advise Metrolinx on the scope of the study. The committee will be made up of community representatives, transit riders and independent technical experts. Issues they could raise to be addressed in the terms of reference might include staging criteria for the electrification of GO rail lines, performance improvement for riders, urban planning benefits and vehicle technology options and availability.

It is important to note that until we are able to move forward with electrifying the line, we must address the current capacity and congestion concerns in the Georgetown corridor. That is why Metrolinx is taking extra care on infrastructure design to make sure it supports future electrification.

I mentioned previously that all structures will be constructed to meet the greater height requirements for electrification, track spacing will allow for the foundations and columns required, and signal systems are all being upgraded.

HEALTH CARE

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: My question is for the Minister of Health. I'm going to send the minister a letter. Minister, will you confirm that on June 29, 2006, your predecessor wrote to the 14 chairs of Ontario's LHINs, stating that "our government is in the process of developing a 10-year health systems strategic plan, to be made public next spring," which would be 2007? The plan, we know, is finished, sitting on your desk. Will you explain why you have withheld the 10-year plan from the public for more than two years? What are you hiding?

Hon. David Caplan: Ontarians aren't impressed by the nonsense rhetoric of the member opposite.

I can tell you that this government has very transparently shared with Ontarians our plans for health care. It's not only a good plan; it's good work, because today, 650,000 Ontarians who did not have a family doctor have one because of the plan and the effort of this government. Today, wait times for angiography are down by 57%; angioplasty, down 46%; pediatric surgery, down 47%; cancer surgeries, down 27%.

The head of the Canadian Medical Association says—and I'm quite proud of this—that Ontario has gone from a laggard under that party to a leader in Canada when it comes to wait-time management. The plan that was unveiled by this government to drive down wait times and access to family health care—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: I think it's important that the minister recognize that he's in charge of a \$42-billion corporation and it's operating without any plan.

We know the plan is finished, because on June 10, 2008, the former minister indicated he would release the plan in 2008. Secondly, KPMG's 2008 LHIN effectiveness review called on the ministry to release its plan. We now hear from the Ontario Hospital Association and the registered nurses' association, who are also calling for a strategic plan so that it could provide clarity around the government's vision, performance indicators as to what it wants to measure itself on, and targets.

When are you finally going to release the long-overdue plan? What are you hiding?

Hon. David Caplan: Unlike the member opposite, I don't have plans to fire nurses. When she was on this side of the House, she and her colleagues fired 6,000 nurses. She and her colleagues closed 28 hospitals. She and her colleagues saw community after community underserved by family health care. Ontarians rejected that plan in favour of one to drive down wait times, in favour of one to ensure that Ontarians have access to family care. Ontarians rejected a party that vows a \$3-billion cut to health care with the elimination of Ontario's health premium.

We are working on a 10-year strategic plan. We are going to ensure that it is delivered when it is ready and when we have it right. But I can assure this member and her colleagues that we will not take their advice to cut health care, to fire nurses and to close hospitals, because Ontarians have rejected that failed approach—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. The member for Toronto—Danforth?

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My question is for the Minister of Transportation, who seems to be in transit at the moment.

Mr. Peter Kormos: And he's late.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: And he's late.

The city of Toronto is still waiting for the McGuinty government to partner in the purchase of new streetcars that would create hundreds of jobs in Thunder Bay, streetcars that would improve transit for millions of GTA riders, streetcars that would reduce smog and climate change.

When will the McGuinty government finally step up and support the purchase of Ontario-made streetcars for Toronto?

1110

Hon. James J. Bradley: To the Minister of Energy and Infrastructure.

Hon. George Smitherman: First is to say to my honourable colleague that we're very, very grateful to see the transition in that party's approach with respect to public transit here in Toronto, because we remember all too well that they opposed the expansion of the Spadina subway line to York University and beyond, what they referred to as "the scarcely populated York region."

The honourable member must also have failed to notice that in recent weeks, our government, led by our Premier, made an unprecedented commitment to the con-

struction of transit lines in Toronto, Metrolinx initiatives, at 100% provincial dollars. This is a remarkable transformation.

On the issue of streetcars, we continue to evaluate the city of Toronto's proposal for funds under stimulus and we expect to make decisions in this regard very, very soon.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: It's interesting to hear the minister talk about the investment in streetcar lines. I think we all look forward to looking at the streetcar lines, walking past them and, in some cases, driving past them, but when are you going to commit to put the money in place so there will be streetcars on those streetcar lines? This is a critical piece. If you don't have the streetcars, the lines are just there for show. When will you make the commitment?

Hon. George Smitherman: When will the honourable member stand up as part of his party and make a real commitment to public transit? Because in this Legislature on a daily basis, we see them walking, talking and working actively against the expansion of public transit in the greater Toronto area. They do that on the Georgetown line; they oppose the expansion of public transit to the airport. They stand and are on the record as being opposed to the expansion of the York subway line to York University and beyond to York region, and then the honourable member has the audacity to ask only about one piece of it. Where do they stand on public transit overall?

Our commitments are clear: unprecedented levels of investment, and on the streetcar purchase, in addition to the gas tax revenues, which produce for the city of Toronto \$163 million every single year, we are looking for opportunities to continue to partner on the purchase of additional streetcars, as I said, from a stimulus application that is presently under consideration, with a decision coming shortly.

MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Mr. Jeff Leal: My question today is to the Minister of Community and Social Services. Today is the Canadian Hearing Society's awareness day at Queen's Park. The Canadian Hearing Society provides services that enhance the independence of individuals who are deaf, deafened and hard of hearing and that encourage the prevention of hearing loss.

As a mission statement, the Canadian Hearing Society firmly strives to create "a society where all people are respected; have full access to communication; and are able to participate without social, economic, or emotional barriers."

My question is very simple and direct: What is our government doing to ensure that the Canadian Hearing Society and agencies like it are able to successfully carry out this very important mission statement?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Thank you to the member from Peterborough for this question. First of all, let me

welcome to the House the Canadian Hearing Society and thank them for all the good work that they're doing.

In 2007, we announced that more than \$20 million will be invested over three years to strengthen community social services organizations, including agencies providing interpreter and intervener services. With this investment, agencies providing interpreter services receive a 2% increase to base budgets. We have also provided funding for costs that may include wage increases, legal obligations and other cost-of-living increases.

Interpreter and intervener services are vital support services for Ontarians, and agencies such as the CHS are at the forefront of helping vulnerable Ontarians perform activities of daily living and engage in their communities.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Jeff Leal: Minister, thank you very much for that informative answer. The Canadian Hearing Society is one great example of an organization that is taking an innovative approach to providing mental health treatment from a community level. CHS is making a real difference in my riding of Peterborough through the CONNECT program, which provides mental health counselling services to individuals who are deaf, deafened or hard of hearing.

As a member of the Select Committee on Mental Health, I've heard individuals and their compelling stories right across the province. I know that there is much to be done with regard to mental health and addictions. Would the minister share with the House what progress has been made to date with both the select committee and its advisory group on mental health and addictions in the province of Ontario?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: I refer to the question to the Minister of Health.

Hon. David Caplan: I'd like to thank the member from Peterborough for the question and for his advocacy on this issue.

I'd like to recognize the Canadian Hearing Society for being here today and for the great work that they do in our communities. CHS is indeed a valued partner in the overall health care agenda, and I'm happy to share that the CHS was part of the provincial consultations with provincial providers and consumer organizations just this past Friday, as part of our advisory committee on mental health and addictions that I established. The advisory committee will help to provide direction on the development of a 10-year comprehensive strategy for mental health and addictions. We have also established—and I was pleased that my colleague across the way suggested—a select committee on mental health and addictions.

Since 2003, our investments have expanded access to over 200,000 more Ontarians and hired more than 1,100 new mental health workers. Since 2003, this government has increased funding by more than \$200 million—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: My question is to the Minister of Economic Development. Yesterday, the Premier was an-

nouncing a handout for another winner in the McGuinty economic lottery. He jokingly offered the job of economic development minister to Sir Elton John. Meant to be humorous, this comment speaks to a very serious issue, and that is that this Premier and his government do not understand the critical role of the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade. Economic development sets a framework for Ontario's competitiveness, productivity and, ultimately, the prosperity of the private sector, but this Premier is using the ministry for photo ops and grand announcements with celebrities.

Premier, why do you treat economic development like a personal plaything? When will you stop working for yourself and start working for the people of Ontario?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: A couple of things: I know that the member opposite is not recommending that any of us give up our sense of humour, notwithstanding difficult times. The other thing I'm asking him to recognize is that the announcement yesterday was about 265 Ontario jobs. Ontario taxpayers came to the table with \$22 million.

Starz Animation Toronto is a world-leading production studio of digital media. They are at present producing a film for Tim Burton—and yes, Elton John is also going to have one of his movies produced there. If we can continue to draw big names like that from around the world, that's good for Toronto. It's good for jobs, it's good for Ontario, and it's good for our future.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary? The member from Durham.

Mr. John O'Toole: Premier, it's very clear with your response yesterday that you're somewhat disconnected from economic reality. You're sort of like Elton John's "Rocket Man" song, where you're on another planet. And you're right: Starz Animation is a wonderful company and it's great to have Elton John involved; but Premier, this is very important. There are other studios, and you've just really got rid of all of them. You've given Starz a \$23-million lead on the competition, so you're busy picking winners and losers. That's the issue here.

We don't think, in the opposition, Premier, that there are losers. What we're saying is, you've got to provide a level playing field for all the companies. We applaud competition. We applaud innovation. Premier, what is your plan for the other companies that you've just put out of business?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Well, a few things. My honourable colleague knows that there are a number of initiatives that we have taken in order to improve the business environment so that we can create more jobs. He knows about our proposal to cut business taxes for our big companies and our small companies; he knows about the special tax initiatives for the entertainment sector.

I'm not sure whether he's telling me that we should not have participated in this venture with Starz Animation here in Toronto or whether he feels that somehow we've cut off others. The fact is we have a great program: It's the Next Generation of Jobs Fund. It's open to applications from companies around the province. This

was a successful application. It resulted in some 265 jobs. We think that's worthy of celebration. We think it's a good foundation on which to continue to build, and we want to use that to encourage more businesses to apply to our fund, so we can find more partnerships.

1120

CORRECTIONAL SERVICES

Mr. Peter Kormos: My question is to the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services. With Ontario's jails increasingly overcrowded, with overburdened correctional officers forced to cope with deplorable working conditions and mandatory overtime, and with lives being put at risk, when will this government provide the resources Ontario's correctional workers so desperately, desperately need?

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: Well, the short answer to the question is: We have in the past, we continue to do so in the present and we will continue to invest in the future. Here is how we're doing that: We're doing that by increasing budgets; we're doing that by increasing facility space; we're doing that by increasing the number of beds—unlike what they did when they were in government, when they reduced beds, when they reduced facilities, when they reduced cash. This government will continue to be committed to the correctional services division of our ministry in a very, very proactive way.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Kormos: The minister speaks so ill of his Liberal colleague Bob Rae.

Another life was lost just last month at the Elgin-Middlesex Detention Centre. Correctional officers had warned that this would happen because of overcrowded and inhumane conditions. Now we're hearing about inmates not getting to court on time because of chronic corrections understaffing.

How much more evidence does this minister need before he acts to resolve Ontario's growing corrections crisis and stops blaming it on his Liberal colleague Bob Rae?

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: Last time I checked, between 1990 and 1995 there was a New Democratic Party government. The last time history will check, it was that government. Here's what they did: They cut corrections operating budgets by \$20 million in 1993-94, they cut \$13 million in 1994-95 and they cut \$25 million in 1995-96; that's the record. They didn't build one new bed; that's the record. They reduced staff; that's the record. They imposed the social contract; that's the record. We've taken exactly the opposite approach. We're building new facilities, new capacity. We're investing in our correctional services sector, and we will continue to do so because, unlike the New Democratic government of 1990-95, we appreciate the efforts they put forth.

IMMIGRANTS' SKILLS

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: My question is to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. Minister, Ontario promises

a place of opportunity for newcomers to this great land. It is this opportunity that draws the world's best to our shores and to our province. Ottawa, like every city and town across this province, has a keen need for the skills, talents and energies of these newcomers so that they can participate fully and deservedly in an economy and way of life that only Ontario can offer.

Sometimes I wonder whether we have lived up to that promise, with all the tales of doctors driving cabs and engineers serving shawarma. Newcomers are a part of the backbone of our economy. It is imperative that we ensure that these immigrants are fully integrated into the workforce, especially in tough economic times.

Minister, could you please tell this House what this government is doing to improve opportunities for newcomers to forge stable and rewarding careers in Ontario.

Hon. Michael Chan: I want to thank the honourable member for his question. In the Ottawa area, I can assure you, the honourable member is a formidable fighter for the benefit of newcomers.

It's my pleasure to discuss bridge training programs, which have time and time again proven themselves successful in helping newcomers. These programs assist individuals with international credentials to move quickly into the workforce and enable newcomers to get licensed and get jobs in their field of study. This is why we are investing more than \$30 million in 38 bridge training projects across the province. This initiative will help 10,000 newcomers, particularly in the health care, finance, agricultural, tourism and IT sectors. On your supplementary, I will elaborate more.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: I'm pleased to note that five of these important programs will be based in my riding of Ottawa Centre—a total investment of almost \$6.25 million to help newcomers there. Algonquin College will receive over \$1.25 million to certify immigrant financial professionals. The Catholic Immigration Centre of Ottawa will get \$1.5 million to help almost 500 internationally trained health professionals. The Ottawa Chinese Community Service Centre will develop 120 IT professionals for Ottawa's formidable IT sector using their almost \$650,000.

Minister, please tell these organizations, our new immigrants and all the people of Ottawa Centre why we are certain that bridge training will be effective. How are we to know that it will build productive members of our economy and society for the future?

Hon. Michael Chan: Since 2003, the McGuinty government has invested more than \$120 million in over 180 bridge training programs, helping 30,000 newcomers succeed. For example, 90% of participants who completed the CARE program for internationally trained nurses obtained employment within six months. Or just look at the University of Toronto pharmacy program, which has improved the pass rate on the pharmacy licensure examination from 20% to a whopping 90%.

Bridge training is truly a win-win-win situation. Employers win with access to a pool of highly trained workers, and newcomers win by being able to get licensed and find jobs in their field.

The McGuinty government, unlike the opposition, understands that when newcomers succeed, Ontario succeeds.

FULL-DAY KINDERGARTEN

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: My question is to the Minister of Education. Minister, in 2007, your government appointed Dr. Charles Pascal as a special adviser on full-day kindergarten. Since then, we haven't heard a word, not from Dr. Pascal, not from the budget and certainly not from you.

As you know, a program of this magnitude will require a great deal of preparation time on the part of school boards to implement. Your own Safe Schools Act, as you know, which is a mere two pages, is going to require eight months to implement.

It is now 18 months since the Premier appointed Dr. Pascal, and Ontarians, especially the parents who counted on this program, haven't heard any details. Are you waiting for this session to end before releasing Dr. Pascal's report?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: No. We are absolutely determined to get this right. Dr. Pascal has met with the Premier, and both Minister Matthews and I have had conversations with him. He is working on the report, and we expect to receive it.

The important thing is that we are committed to moving forward on full-day programming for four- and five-year-olds. We have not indicated in any way that we're not going to continue down that road. In fact, we're very much looking forward to the recommendations that Mr. Pascal brings forward. I know that he has been speaking with stakeholders around the province—and, in fact, across the country—to get the very best models and advice possible. So I look forward to the report, and more than that, I look forward to moving ahead to implement full-day programming for four- and five-year-olds.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: Minister, all I'm asking for is what you promised, and the report is already past due. Parents and school boards really have a right to know—they need to plan. This was promised to them.

Children born this year would have been eligible for the early learning before the Premier de-prioritized this program and delayed the funding. Children only get one chance at this. The Premier plans to put early learning on the back burner, and that means that young parents who supported this government's campaign promise in 2007 for full-day kindergarten will be hung out to dry. That's the way it goes with this government: promises made, promises delayed, promises broken.

Is that what you are telling us, Minister? Is this another broken promise? Is this part of the plan to recycle this announcement for full-day kindergarten as part of your 2011 election campaign?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: We've been crystal clear from the inception of this initiative that we were going to begin implementing the full-day programming for four-

and five-year-olds beginning in September 2010. That has been our position from the beginning, and if the member opposite cared to look at the speeches and the platform that we ran on and that we have made since October 2007, she would know that we have been consistently supportive of that program beginning September 2010. That's the position.

In fact, we said that the report was going to be released in the spring. It is not overdue. We look forward to getting that report. As I said, more than that, we look forward to having that full-day programming for four- and five-year-olds. We always said it would be a phased-in program, beginning September 2010.

1130

MANUFACTURING JOBS

Mr. Paul Miller: My question is to the new Minister of Economic Development. The city of Hamilton has suffered significant job losses. The US Steel-Stelco closure has affected families throughout our region. Not only do we have job losses at US Steel and Stelco, but we now have a work stoppage at National Steel Car—not instigated by the workers; by the company, which is talking about moving to Alabama and has already purchased land there.

When I started at Stelco, you couldn't get a parking spot on Burlington Street. You had to line up for the punch clocks. You could fire a cannon off down Burlington Street and not hit anyone now.

What has this government done to secure the return of good manufacturing jobs to the Hamilton area?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: My colleague will know that we've made manufacturing a very high priority, something that we are looking to continue to address. But one of the biggest demands placed on the steel industry comes from the auto sector, and that's why we have invested significant taxpayer dollars in the restructuring of Chrysler. That's why we're at the table with GM. It's why, beginning over five years ago, we put in place our auto investment strategy, which landed billions of new dollars of investment here. It's why we continue our discussions with the federal government and with Washington.

We have also kept a very close watch on developments in the city of Hamilton itself. I had an opportunity not too long ago to speak with the mayor, to talk more about the particular challenges and particular opportunities. I think that if you check the record, you'll see that on a number of occasions we have found a way to collaborate very closely with the people of Hamilton.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Paul Miller: I'm very concerned about some of the comments that have been made in this House about, "No protectionism is going on in the States." I'm very concerned about, "Everything will get better." That's all I hear in here. Claims of "no protectionism" are suspect at best.

Our steel production has ceased in Hamilton. In Indiana, US Steel has reopened previously idled blast

furnaces. US Steel has said that steel production will return to Hamilton when things get better. Then why are they sending ships from the States to remove all raw materials from the Hamilton plant and shipping them back? Twenty-six ships have taken all the raw material off the ground back to the States. That's not a good indicator.

We need a plan, actual steps to bring these jobs back to Hamilton and get a proper return on the money that we've invested. How is this government going to secure a return on its dollar and get jobs back to Hamilton?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I love this member's passion. The causes that he champions are important not just to him but to all of us, but he needs to understand that he has to get onside with our budget.

One of the most important things that we can do for our manufacturers in particular is give them the advantages that they enjoy in 130 other countries, where they have a single sales tax, where they can reduce their input costs, where they can reduce the cost of their exports so that they become more competitive, so that they can create more jobs, so that they can hire more mums and dads and make families feel a greater sense of hopefulness in the city of Hamilton.

It comes back to our budget. That's why I'd ask my honourable colleague to give us all his support as we move forward with the single sales tax in the province of Ontario.

STUDENT SUMMER JOBS

Ms. Helena Jaczek: My question is for the Minister of Small Business and Consumer Services. These trying economic times are affecting us all. Summer and the end of the school year are both fast approaching, and with the current economic crisis, many students in my riding of Oak Ridges–Markham are particularly worried about securing traditional summer employment this year.

As the Minister of Small Business and Consumer Services, I understand that part of your mandate is to foster entrepreneurship and innovation in our province. What initiatives has your ministry taken to encourage young entrepreneurship and help these young people secure jobs?

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: I want to thank the member from Oak Ridges–Markham for asking this question. I agree with her completely that these are tough economic times and challenging times especially for our students, so it's very important for our government to make sure that our students get the opportunity in the summer to start their own businesses.

Our Summer Company program is one of our very successful programs. Last year, we had about 360 students accepted into this program. This year, we have expanded the program by another \$1 million so that we can provide more opportunities to students. Under this program, what we do is, we actually give money to students to start their own business—\$1,500 in the beginning and \$1,500 at the end. But in addition, we also

provide them with mentors so that they can start their own business and be successful and own their own businesses. That's the only way we can create a culture of entrepreneurship in this province and make sure that in the future the province stays prosperous.

DEFERRED VOTES

BUDGET MEASURES ACT, 2009

LOI DE 2009 SUR LES MESURES BUDGÉTAIRES

Deferred vote on the motion for third reading of Bill 162, An Act respecting the budget measures and other matters / Projet de loi 162, Loi concernant les mesures budgétaires et d'autres questions.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Call in the members. This will be a 10-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1135 to 1145.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): All those in favour will please rise one at a time and be recorded by the Clerk.

Ayes

Aggelonitis, Sophia
Albanese, Laura
Arthurs, Wayne
Balkissoon, Bas
Bartolucci, Rick
Bentley, Christopher
Berardinetti, Lorenzo
Best, Margaret
Bradley, James J.
Brotten, Laurel C.
Brown, Michael A.
Brownell, Jim
Cansfield, Donna H.
Caplan, David
Carroll, Aileen
Chan, Michael
Colle, Mike
Crozier, Bruce
Delaney, Bob
Dickson, Joe
Dombrowsky, Leona
Duguid, Brad

Duncan, Dwight
Flynn, Kevin Daniel
Fonseca, Peter
Gerretsen, John
Gravelle, Michael
Hoy, Pat
Jaczek, Helena
Jeffrey, Linda
Johnson, Rick
Kular, Kuldip
Kwinter, Monte
Lalonde, Jean-Marc
Leal, Jeff
Levac, Dave
Mangat, Amrit
Matthews, Deborah
Mauro, Bill
McGuinty, Dalton
McMeekin, Ted
McNeely, Phil
Meilleur, Madeleine
Milloy, John

Mitchell, Carol
Moridi, Reza
Naqvi, Yasir
Oraziotti, David
Phillips, Gerry
Qaadri, Shafiq
Ramal, Khalil
Ramsay, David
Rinaldi, Lou
Ruprecht, Tony
Sandals, Liz
Sergio, Mario
Smith, Monique
Smitherman, George
Sousa, Charles
Takhar, Harinder S.
Van Bommel, Maria
Watson, Jim
Wilkinson, John
Wynne, Kathleen O.
Zimmer, David

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): All those opposed?

Nays

Arnott, Ted
Bailey, Robert
Barrett, Toby
Bisson, Gilles
Chudleigh, Ted
DiNovo, Cheri
Dunlop, Garfield
Gélinas, France
Hardeman, Ernie

Horwath, Andrea
Jones, Sylvia
Kormos, Peter
Marchese, Rosario
Martiniuk, Gerry
Miller, Paul
Munro, Julia
Murdoch, Bill
O'Toole, John

Ouellette, Jerry J.
Prue, Michael
Runciman, Robert W.
Savoline, Joyce
Sterling, Norman W.
Witmer, Elizabeth
Yakubski, John

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller):
The ayes are 65; the nays are 25.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I declare the motion carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

Third reading agreed to.

MINING AMENDMENT ACT, 2009

LOI DE 2009 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES MINES

Deferred vote on the motion for second reading of Bill 173, An Act to amend the Mining Act / Projet de loi 173, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les mines.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1149 to 1150.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): All those in favour will rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Aggelonitis, Sophia
Albanese, Laura
Arnott, Ted
Arthurs, Wayne
Balkissoon, Bas
Bartolucci, Rick
Bentley, Christopher
Berardinetti, Lorenzo
Best, Margaret
Bradley, James J.
Broten, Laurel C.
Brown, Michael A.
Brownell, Jim
Cansfield, Donna H.
Caplan, David
Carroll, Aileen
Chan, Michael
Chudleigh, Ted
Colle, Mike
Crozier, Bruce
Delaney, Bob
Dickson, Joe
Dombrowsky, Leona
Duguid, Brad
Duncan, Dwight
Dunlop, Garfield
Flynn, Kevin Daniel

Fonseca, Peter
Gerretsen, John
Gravelle, Michael
Hardeman, Ernie
Hoy, Pat
Jaczek, Helena
Jeffrey, Linda
Johnson, Rick
Jones, Sylvia
Kular, Kuldip
Kwinter, Monte
Lalonde, Jean-Marc
Leal, Jeff
Levac, Dave
Mangat, Amrit
Martiniuk, Gerry
Matthews, Deborah
Mauro, Bill
McGuinty, Dalton
McMeekin, Ted
McNeely, Phil
Meilleur, Madeleine
Milloy, John
Mitchell, Carol
Moridi, Reza
Munro, Julia
Naqvi, Yasir

O'Toole, John
Oraziotti, David
Pendergast, Leeanna
Phillips, Gerry
Qadri, Shafiq
Ramal, Khalil
Ramsay, David
Rinaldi, Lou
Runciman, Robert W.
Ruprecht, Tony
Sandals, Liz
Savoline, Joyce
Sergio, Mario
Smith, Monique
Smitherman, George
Sousa, Charles
Sterling, Norman W.
Takharr, Harinder S.
Van Bommel, Maria
Watson, Jim
Wilkinson, John
Witmer, Elizabeth
Wynne, Kathleen O.
Yakubuski, John
Zimmer, David

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): All those opposed?

Nays

Bisson, Gilles
DiNovo, Cheri
Gélinas, France

Horwath, Andrea
Kormos, Peter
Marchese, Rosario

Miller, Paul
Prue, Michael

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 79; the nays are 8.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I declare the motion carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Shall the bill be ordered for third reading? The Minister of Northern Development and Mines.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: I would ask that the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on General Government.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): So ordered.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I just want to take this opportunity—Speaker's prerogative—to welcome some guests in the west gallery: Helen Harakis, Wendy Gamble and Alison Clarke.

There being no further deferred votes, this House stands recessed until 3 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1154 to 1500.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I'd like to introduce Jacob Robbins-Kanter, from my riding of Toronto-Danforth. Jacob has just finished his first year at McGill. Welcome, Jacob.

Mr. Bruce Crozier: I'd like to introduce to the Legislature a long-time friend of many of us, Arthur Lofsky, who just can't stay away from this place.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I don't believe they have arrived yet, but I had my picture taken with two grade 10 classes from Rehoboth Christian High School. There are 50 students, and they were brought by their teacher, Frank Westerink. They will be here momentarily, and I'd like to welcome them to Queen's Park.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

WALTER BEATH

Mr. John O'Toole: It's with distinct pleasure today that I rise to pay tribute to a very good friend and an important Ontario citizen, Mr. Walter Beath, who celebrated his 90th birthday on Valentine's Day 2009.

I'm pleased to report that Walter keeps active with long walks in Port Perry, the completion of a 200-page family history and a keen interest in politics at all levels.

Mr. Walter Beath was the first chair of the region of Durham, serving from 1973 until his retirement in 1980. Durham region brought together at least 20 independent municipalities into eight lower-tier municipalities and the single-tier Durham region. The success of Durham region is a tribute to Walter's diplomacy, vision and steady hand at the wheel during those formative years.

Walter Beath was a former Ontario county warden, a member of the East Whitby township council and a member of the Ontario county high school board. He served on the Ontario county crop association, the Oshawa Fair board and the beef association, and in the planning of the International Plowing Match, to name just a few of his connections to agriculture and his community.

Walter and his wife, the late Earline Hayes, farmed 200 acres near the Oshawa-Clarington town line, where they raised their sons, Grant and Wayne.

Walter Beath is a leader in agriculture, in the community, in public service—in everything he does.

I wish you a happy year ahead, Walter, as you approach your 91st birthday. Congratulations.

NIAGARA HEALTH SYSTEM

Mr. Peter Kormos: The board of trustees of the Niagara Health System, that unelected, anonymous, indifferent, disdainful backroom group, has been wreaking havoc on small-town hospitals down in Niagara. Fort Erie hospital is for all intents and purposes gone; Port Colborne hospital is for all intents and purposes going; Welland County General Hospital is being cut off at the knees—obviously, it's a slippery slope—to the point where it's but a shell.

This is the NHS, the Niagara Health System, that's supervised by Dalton McGuinty's equally unelected, undemocratic, hand-picked, politically appointed LHIN. There's a lot of winking and nodding going on down there, because the unelected, unaccountable, undemocratic, hand-picked, politically appointed Dalton McGuinty LHIN, of course, is approving the hospital closures by the NHS that are taking place.

The NHS announces that it needs four new trustees. Is it holding a public election? Of course not. Is it a public process? Of course not. They're receiving applications. The very same board of trustees that has as part of its Dalton McGuinty-approved agenda shutting down small-town hospitals will pick and choose its new board members in a secret, backroom process that puts Tammany Hall to shame. One can just see the smoke curling up into the rafters.

This is unacceptable. It's time that we publicly elected hospital service boards to create transparency and democracy.

RENEWABLE ENERGY

Mr. Mario Sergio: Last Thursday, I was proud to visit St. Basil-The-Great, a high school in my riding, which was a part-recipient of a \$50-million investment for public school boards to reduce energy costs by installing renewable energy technologies for heating, cooling or generating electricity.

St. Basil's principal, Carmine Settino, and his dedicated staff have spearheaded a student eco club green campaign. It was inspiring to hear the students speak so passionately about their green school initiatives, regarding their wind projects, solar panels and strategic landscaping. They are a shining example of how a school and its students can lead by example.

Our government's green conservation investment will bring a range of renewable technologies to schools, including small-scale wind projects to generate electricity for use in schools, solar photovoltaic to generate electricity, solar thermal for heating, and geothermal systems for heating and cooling.

Ontario's elementary and secondary schools have significant energy costs: nearly half a billion dollars each

year. The aim is to help school boards reduce those costs, as well as reduce greenhouse gas emissions, save on energy demand, and support more green jobs.

Ontario's green economy stands to benefit as this investment provides opportunities for suppliers of renewable energy technologies in the province.

ADOPTION DISCLOSURE

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: I rise today to ask the government to postpone the opening of adoption records from June 1 for at least one month.

To date, only 2,500 people have registered a veto to stop the disclosure of their adoption records; this represents less than half of 1% of the people eligible to do so. In other provinces where similar laws have been introduced, the figure was 3% to 5%. This means that in Ontario we should have expected somewhere between 10,000 and 30,000 vetoes to be filed.

Most people don't know this change is occurring to their privacy rights. In today's world, government newspaper ads are not enough to let the public know what's happening.

The sincerity of this government in advertising the right to veto disclosure is suspect. In their first adoption disclosure legislation, this government tried to run roughshod over privacy rights by not offering a disclosure veto. Luckily, that law was thrown out by the Court of Appeal, over their objection. Now I fear they are hoping to provide wide-open access to adoption records by not telling all Ontario adoptees and birth parents of their right to protect their privacy by registering the veto.

I call on this government to postpone the opening of these records until they have undertaken an extensive radio and TV campaign.

TAMIL CANADIAN COMMUNITY

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: I rise today to speak on the situation facing the Tamil people of Sri Lanka, as there are a significant number of Tamil Canadians in my riding, throughout Scarborough and the GTA.

Last week, the grounds of this Legislature were filled to capacity with Sri Lankan Tamils. They were numbered in the thousands.

Last week's events can be characterized more as a memorial to those who lost their lives in the Tamils' quest for justice in their homeland. In hindsight, it was a slow introduction to the community of the news that would follow days later that their leader as well as hundreds of innocent Tamils were killed in the final days of the army attack.

The UN Secretary General visited Sri Lanka on May 23 and called for international groups to be allowed access to the area. His request has been denied, and no international journalists or media are allowed. This has led to criticisms of the Sri Lankan government by international groups.

I've received several calls asking that our federal government call on the Sri Lankan government to handle the remains of dead families so that proper burial rights can be administered, and to be in dialogue with the new leadership.

The Premier has spoken to this matter and has echoed a call for all sides to enter into dialogue to resolve the issues that face Tamil people. I echo the call, on behalf of the Tamil Canadians I've spoken with, that the Premier made on May 14 that all sides come together to resolve all the outstanding issues.

1510

SENIORS' EDUCATION DAY

Mr. Gerry Martiniuk: My annual Gerry Martiniuk Seniors' Education Day will be held this Friday, on May 29, at 9 in the morning at the Newfoundland Club in Cambridge, 1500 Dunbar Road. Tickets for the event can be obtained free to Cambridge and North Dumfries residents by phoning my office, 519-623-5852.

This year we have arranged for a great program. My good friend Councillor Karl Kiefer and his associate Joanne Weiler will be speaking on personal health and long-term care. Abigail Dancey, representing the community care access centre, will speak on connecting you with care in our community. Liz Nieson, representing the Cambridge Working Group on Elder Abuse, will speak on ageing with dignity, honour and respect. To entertain, we have again brought back, at popular request, my friend Adam Timoon, entertainer extraordinaire. Afterwards a free lunch will be served.

Information tables will be available with representatives from the Waterloo Regional Police Service, Cambridge Fire Fighters, the Friendly Visiting program of Cambridge, the Waterloo Region Committee on Elder Abuse, the Elder Abuse Response Team, Community Support Connections, the Alzheimer Society, the VON PATER program, CMH Lifeline, Gary Goodyear MP, the city of Cambridge, Cambridge Senior Centres, Cambridge Hearing Society and the YMCA of Cambridge.

Thanks to the Newfoundland Club and my good friend Councillor Linda Whetham, for all of their help.

WINDSOR SPITFIRES HOCKEY CLUB

Mr. Bruce Crozier: How about those Windsor Spitfires, eh? After nine days of pressure-packed hockey for a team that faced elimination in four straight games, the Windsor Spitfires defied all the odds this past Sunday to capture their first Memorial Cup title in the franchise's 34-year history. In the 91-year history of the Memorial Cup, no team had won a title after losing the first two games of the tournament. Windsor eliminated the entire field on its way back to the top and capped it with a 4-1 win over the Kelowna Rockets in Sunday's final before 4,800 fans in Rimouski, Quebec. It had been 21 years since the Spits even came close to tasting victory. In 1988, they played in their only Memorial Cup game, losing in the finals to the Medicine Hat Tigers.

I ask you to join all the fans of the Windsor Spitfires who watched this nail-biting round robin series in congratulating the fine young men who played their hearts out, not just for themselves, but for their community, for their coaching staff headed by Bob Boughner, and especially for their special captain, Mickey Renaud, who died 15 months ago. The game was in his spirit.

GÉRALD SAVOIE

M. Phil McNeely: Je suis très fier d'annoncer que M. Gérald Savoie, président-directeur général de l'Hôpital Montfort d'Ottawa, a été nommé membre honoraire du Réseau des services de santé en français de l'Est de l'Ontario.

Depuis le 15 novembre 2001, le réseau est reconnu par le gouvernement de l'Ontario à titre d'organisme consultatif indépendant responsable du développement de la planification des services de santé en français dans l'est de l'Ontario.

J'ai eu le plaisir de travailler avec M. Savoie à quelques reprises, et il mérite très bien cette nomination. C'est un chef de file qui a contribué non seulement à l'expansion de l'Hôpital Montfort mais également au développement du réseau et de l'avancement des services de santé en français en Ontario. C'est une personne reconnue comme un dirigeant visionnaire en raison de ses pratiques de gestion et de son leadership. Peu importe les défis d'un projet, M. Savoie y trouve toujours une solution. Il sait s'entourer de personnes dévouées et engagées comme lui. Il croit fermement qu'on peut toujours trouver un moyen de faire mieux et qu'il n'existe pas d'obstacles insurmontables.

Je vous invite donc, tous et toutes, à vous joindre à moi pour féliciter M. Savoie de sa nomination au réseau et de le remercier pour sa contribution au secteur de la santé, et surtout aux services de santé en français en Ontario.

GREENHOUSE INDUSTRY

Mr. Pat Hoy: I would like to welcome members of the Ontario Greenhouse Alliance who are visiting us here in the Legislature today, some of whom may have an opportunity to join us later in the members' gallery.

Formed in 2003, the alliance represents the largest cluster of greenhouse production in North America and is located right here in Ontario. The greenhouse industry contributes \$4 billion per year to our province's economy. In Ontario, there are over 1,200 greenhouse operations, most of which are concentrated in and around the ridings of Essex and Chatham-Kent-Essex and the Niagara region.

Greenhouse operations in Ontario employ more than 17,000 people with over \$2 billion in structures. At the current rate of expansion, the industry is targeting a further investment in Ontario of some \$20 million per annum, bringing substantial benefit to rural economies.

Again, I welcome the Ontario Greenhouse Alliance to Queen's Park, and on behalf of my colleague Bruce Crozier and myself, I encourage all members to stop by

the legislative dining room between the hours of 3 and 5 this afternoon to meet some of their members and, of course, to pick up a sample of their beautiful plants and delicious vegetables grown right here in our backyard, right here in Ontario.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I beg to inform the House that, pursuant to standing order 98(c), a change has been made to the order of precedence on the ballot list for private members' public business, such that Ms. DiNovo assumes ballot item number 28 and Mr. Hampton assumes ballot item number 45.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

Mrs. Julia Munro: I beg leave to Present a report on Agencies, Boards and Commissions: the Ontario Education Communications Authority (TVO) from the Standing Committee on Government Agencies and move the adoption of its recommendations.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Does the member wish to make a brief statement?

Mrs. Julia Munro: As Chair of the Standing Committee on Government Agencies, it is a pleasure to table the report of the committee. This is the second in a series dealing with our mandated review of selected agencies, boards and commissions of the province.

This report of the committee reviews the operations and work of TVOntario and makes recommendations on how they may make improvements. Subjects dealt with in the report include TVO's coverage of Ontario politics and government, including the business of the Legislature; production of new cost-effective regional-based content; transparency in the reporting of TVO's membership and viewership numbers; and ongoing support for activities of the Independent Learning Centre—ILC.

Our committee expresses its appreciation to all witnesses who appeared during the public hearings on this agency. I thank the committee members for their helpful contributions to the review process, as well as legislative staff Douglas Arnott, clerk of the committee; and Larry Johnston, the research officer.

I move adjournment of the debate.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Debate adjourned.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

DEEP RIVER MANAGEMENT SERVICES INC. ACT, 2009

Mr. Yakabuski moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr16, An Act to revive Deep River Management Services Inc.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Pursuant to standing order 86, this bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills.

SISTERS OF ST. JOSEPH OF THE DIOCESE OF LONDON, IN ONTARIO ACT (TAX RELIEF), 2009

Mr. Ramal moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill Pr26, An Act respecting The Sisters of St. Joseph of the Diocese of London, in Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Pursuant to standing order 86, this bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills.

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ONTARIO TRILLIUM PROTECTION ACT, 2009 LOI DE 2009 SUR LA PROTECTION DU TRILLIUM EN ONTARIO

Mr. Leal moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill 184, An Act to amend the Floral Emblem Act /
Projet de loi 184, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'emblème floral.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member for a short statement.

Mr. Jeff Leal: This bill amends the Floral Emblem Act of Ontario to prohibit, with limited exceptions, injuring or destroying in any way the plant that produces the Trillium grandiflorum, Ontario's floral emblem, popularly known as the white trillium. It creates an offence for doing so punishable by a fine of not less than \$500.

NEW HERMES LIMITED/NEW HERMES LIMITÉE ACT, 2009

Mrs. Mangat moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill Pr24, An Act to revive a corporation named New Hermes Limited in English and New Hermes Limitée in French.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Pursuant to standing order 86, this bill stands refers to the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION
AMENDMENT ACT (GREENHOUSE GAS
EMISSIONS TRADING), 2009

LOI DE 2009 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR
LA PROTECTION DE L'ENVIRONNEMENT
(ÉCHANGE DE DROITS D'ÉMISSION
DE GAZ À EFFET DE SERRE)

Mr. Gerretsen moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 185, An Act to amend the Environmental Protection Act with respect to greenhouse gas emissions trading and other economic and financial instruments and market-based approaches / Projet de loi 185, Loi modifiant la Loi sur la protection de l'environnement en ce qui concerne l'échange de droits d'émission de gaz à effet de serre ainsi que d'autres instruments économiques et financiers et approches axées sur le marché.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour will say "aye."

All those opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The minister for a short statement?

Hon. Mr. Gerretsen: I'll wait until ministerial statements.

MOTIONS

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Hon. Brad Duguid: I believe that we have unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding Bill 167.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Agreed? I heard a no.

All those in favour will say "aye."

All those opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Minister of Aboriginal Affairs.

Hon. Brad Duguid: I move that, notwithstanding any standing order, when Bill 167, An Act to promote reductions in the use and creation of toxic substances and to amend other Acts is reported, it may be called as government business on the same calendar day.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS

Hon. John Gerretsen: It's a great honour to rise today to table an important piece of legislation, the pro-

posed Environmental Protection Amendment Act on Greenhouse Gas Emissions Trading.

Climate change is our generation's greatest environmental challenge. It threatens our health, our economy, our communities and our way of life. We have a clear and abiding responsibility to the people of this province to take decisive action to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions. By doing so, we lay the foundation of a sustainable green economy for our province and for a prosperous, healthy and successful future for our children and grandchildren.

Our government has set ambitious greenhouse gas reduction targets in our climate change action plan. Developing and adopting a fair and effective cap-and-trade system is a necessary step to help us meet these targets and build a stronger, more innovative and competitive green economy.

Some form of cap-and-trade system for North America is inevitable and much needed. We need to be prepared so that we can ensure that Ontario is an active participant in the design of a system that would achieve real reductions in greenhouse gas emissions and provide our industrial sectors with the flexibility that they need to deliver these reductions cost-effectively while continuing to innovate and grow.

Over the past year, we have been establishing the groundwork. We have been developing partnerships with Quebec and with other like-minded provinces and US states through our membership in the Western Climate Initiative to help prepare the way for a cap-and-trade system for North America.

In the United States, President Obama and Congress have moved forward quickly on energy and climate change-related measures to initiate the development of a federal cap-and-trade system through the Waxman-Markey bill. The President has clearly stated that these actions are integral to his strategy for tackling climate change and revitalizing the American economy.

To ensure that Ontario's objectives of combatting the costs of climate change and building a sustainable green economy are met, we need to keep pace with our trading partners both here in Canada and in the United States. Our proposed enabling legislation would help us be ready to implement a cap-and-trade system through future regulations, allow us to link the other trading systems and respond to fast-moving developments at the federal levels both here in Canada and in the US.

The proposed enabling legislation we are introducing today would amend the Environmental Protection Act to provide the government with the authority to set up an emissions trading system that can link with the Western Climate Initiative in a broader North American system as those systems develop. It will also enable Ontario to create regulations that would set the actual trading rules, including caps, allocating allowances, reporting systems and offsets, as well as link to other systems elsewhere in North America and indeed throughout the world.

Our approach would provide us with the flexibility to respond as new developments unfold. Through this

process we aim to establish the foundation for a fair and equitable system that would achieve absolute emission reductions and provide certainty and clarity for industry, for the marketplace and for all the jurisdictions involved.

It is important that we involve the affected sectors in establishing how we construct future regulations for a cap-and-trade system. We want to make sure that we get it right to ensure the best approach for Ontario: for our industries and for the workers that they employ. While the proposed bill, if passed, would provide the authority to make regulations, the details of those regulations would not be determined until we have consulted further with industry and stakeholders, a process that began some time ago.

To support this process, a discussion paper on cap-and-trade will be posted on the environmental registry for 60 days. This paper builds on what we have heard from stakeholders and it provides further details and lays out options for the elements of a cap-and-trade system as the basis for consultation on future regulations.

As I've mentioned before, we have been consulting with other sector representatives and other stakeholders as we develop our approach. As a result, our proposed approach is based on firm fundamentals: first of all, establishing a reliable price signal; second, ensuring a level playing field for Ontario industry; third, avoiding duplication with federal regulations; and most important, pursuing absolute greenhouse gas reductions.

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We are continuing to work in partnership with other jurisdictions like Quebec, which has also introduced similar legislation, and the members of the Western Climate Initiative to ensure that we have a harmonized approach and a strong common front to advocate on behalf of Ontario in the future.

Fighting climate change requires that we work across ministries, across jurisdictions and across borders to create a lasting legacy of prosperity for our people, for the health of our province and for the future of our planet. Through this proposed legislation and the approach we will be developing as we move forward, we intend to protect Ontario's interests, create good green jobs and protect our environment for ourselves and future generations. Therefore, I encourage that all members work together on this in supporting this critical step in tackling climate change in Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Responses?

Mr. Toby Barrett: We just heard the other shoe drop on cap-and-trade. It began last summer with Ontario announcing its request to join the Western Climate Initiative. As we heard at that time, this initiative is a collaboration of Arizona, California, New Mexico, Oregon and Washington to address climate change, and laterally, Utah, BC, Manitoba, Montana and Quebec signed on as well. Through the WCI and today's announcement, the goal, to speak broadly, is to address climate change linked to gases like carbon dioxide and other products in the atmosphere. As I understand it, companies that need to increase their emissions or cannot

meet a government-set cap must buy carbon dioxide credits from those who emit less.

There is an historic precedent with respect to cap-and-trade-like systems producing successful results in North America. This concept is similar to the emissions trading process agreed to by Ronald Reagan and Brian Mulroney when they successfully addressed sulphur dioxide and acid rain. That was Canada and the United States at the table, not Ontario and Utah. So cap-and-trade could work with respect to these kinds of emissions.

Having said that, I do have a couple of points of concern. Further, I do note that as government inaction sends Ontario onto the dole and initiates deficit spending and allows our economy to reach ever further into the depths of recession, it's the Ministry of the Environment that seems to be the most active in introducing legislation of late.

With this McGuinty green shift we must ensure that cap-and-trade does not become cap-and-tax. We must ensure that it does not become a green tax or a mechanism to put jurisdictions and companies in Ontario—and certainly in North America, for that matter—at a competitive disadvantage with countries like India and China. I really feel that it's not necessary for Mr. McGuinty to try and out-Obama Obama on the cap-and-trade front.

We have heard of recent rumblings—in this case, south of the border, some controversial legislation initiated by Democrats Henry Waxman and Edward Markey. I assume that that is partly in support of Obama's clean-coal initiative legislation, which is as well oriented towards cap-and-trade. However, we may see further protectionist policies take hold south of the border.

Federal environment minister Jim Prentice recently commented that the allowance of trade sanctions on imports from countries with higher levels of greenhouse gas emissions—again, like China or India; perhaps western Canada—would be, as he said, a prescription for disaster. Trade protectionism under the guise of environmental protectionism: I put that forward. Again, that's a debate better left between Ottawa and Washington, not necessarily Ontario and Arizona.

We know fossil fuels—natural gas, coal, oil—produce carbon dioxide. These fuels also provide 77% of Canada's energy, and that's why Canada has become one of the best places in the world for investment and development. Well, it was before Mr. McGuinty took over.

I will also mention that to date I have found emissions trading very difficult and complex to explain to people. I get a blank stare when I say to people that Ontario has signed cap-and-trade for carbon dioxide with Utah to deal with climate change. First, people around here have never heard "Utah" and "climate change" in the same sentence. Secondly, they indicate to me that that makes about as much sense as Ontario signing cap-and-trade with Arizona. Then I explain to them that that's exactly what McGuinty finished doing.

We've got a lot of work to do on this one. I know there's draft legislation, and this government is going to have its hands full.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Certainly, the NDP and myself, personally, are always happy to have initiatives related to climate change come to this Legislature. There's no question that having debate about climate change's impact on our society and the action that has to be taken is something that is useful, limited but useful. There's no question that in the statement made by the Minister of the Environment he's correct in saying that climate change is an urgent issue for us. The stability of our society, the stability of the weather systems that we depend on for food, the stability of our future rests on us taking concrete and rapid action—bold action—on climate change.

I note that in 2007 I went to the press conference given by the Premier when he was preparing for his next election. At that time, he announced his climate change targets. It is far too grand to call it a plan. He announced his targets. They were too little for the situation that was before us, that continues to be before us, and they included measures like cap-and-trade. One would think that two years later we would be a bit further along than this act, that in fact within six months of that announcement we would have had legislation before this House for debate and for action, because we're missing the boat. We are simply missing the boat.

Two years ago, the UN said that the earth, our society, had 10 years within which to peak on emissions and start coming down if we were going to stabilize the atmosphere. That is not a goal that's going to be met by the efforts of this government. This government is acting completely irresponsibly when it takes slow action and low-level action on an issue that's fundamental to our future.

That, the climate side, the earth sciences side, is one side, but the other is the economic. We here in Ontario are laggards. Look at Quebec; Quebec is the only province in Canada with a fully integrated wind turbine factory. Quebec is a leader on this issue. In Manitoba, they have gone forward on geothermal, with a low-interest loan program for homeowners that has made them leaders in that field. We aren't. If you go to Toledo, Ohio, 6,000 people work in their solar panel industry; 6,000 people who used to make the windshields for cars now make the glass for the PV panels.

We here in Ontario have a huge, huge industrial establishment—you, Speaker, are entirely familiar with the scale and quality of that industrial establishment—which is being dismantled because this government has been slow off the mark. This government has not taken advantage of the opportunities to make a transition to renewable power that would have put people to work a few years ago, would have made the transition to a new manufacturing reality far easier. No, we have a government that has dragged its feet at every step of the way. So now we face the worst of both worlds: a situation where, in fact, we are not taking action quickly enough on climate change and we're not taking action quickly enough on preserving our economy.

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We have before us a cap-and-trade bill. It makes sense to me entirely to cap the level of emissions that come out

of this society. We have to make the transition, there has to be a cap, and then we have to go down from there. But the strategy that you need to do that, to be effective, has got to have a very large component of public investment in renewable energy technologies and transformation of the market and transformation of manufacturing. Frankly, if you don't have that as a driving component, you can put in any cap-and-trade system you want; you aren't going to get where you have to go.

This debate touches on fundamental issues of where this society needs to go and how it's going to get there. My regret is that this bill wasn't before us a year and a half ago. That would have made a lot more sense.

The timelines are short. This government had better speed up because it owes it to the people of Ontario. It owes it to future generations.

PETITIONS

NUCLEAR ENERGY

Mr. Toby Barrett: A petition titled Nuclear Nanticoke: Not So Fast, directed to the Legislature of Ontario as well as Norfolk county council, Haldimand county council, the Honourable Diane Finley and the Honourable Toby Barrett.

"Without any formal public consultation, county councils in both Haldimand and Norfolk have unanimously endorsed the first step in building two nuclear reactors.

"The nuclear power industry has failed to address public concern over the issues of safety and security in the storage and handling of hazardous radioactive spent fuel.

"Nuclear power is not emissions-free with its pollution-intensive activities in uranium mining, transportation and refining.

"No nuclear project has ever come in on-budget or on time, with the taxpayer and the utility customer paying for cost overruns that typically range in the billions of dollars.

"We, the undersigned citizens, demand a complete moratorium on nuclear development until the issues of contamination, cost, security and public consultation are adequately addressed."

I affix my signature to this petition, although I don't completely agree with the last point.

CHILD SAFETY

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I have a petition signed by 30,000 people, a petition organized by a parent of two kids. It reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas on April 8, 2009, Victoria Stafford was abducted from Oliver Stephens elementary school. She was seen leaving the school with an unknown female;

"Whereas the local police force felt the case did not meet the criteria for issuing an Amber Alert; the local community was not made aware of Victoria's abduction and therefore no public information was collected on the case;

"Whereas, had an Amber Alert been issued, someone, somewhere could have spotted Victoria and she may still be alive today;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To request that the OPP immediately review the current criteria for issuing Amber Alerts. This should include more emphasis on the relationship between the parent(s)/guardian(s) and their understanding of their own child."

I agree with this petition and I will be signing it.

SCHOOL FACILITIES

Mr. David Zimmer: I have a petition here from a group of residents in my riding of Willowdale in the Arran Crescent area and the surrounding environments. The petition reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"We, the residents, are opposed to the relocation of St. Joseph Morrow Park secondary school on the St. Agnes/Brebeuf site. That will increase the student population in the area."

I'm happy to present this petition to page Carlyn.

TAXATION

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm pleased to present a petition, which reads as follows:

"Whereas the proposed harmonization of Ontario's retail sales tax ... with the federal goods and services tax ... has the potential to increase the costs of many small businesses and their customers; and

"Whereas these added costs would have a devastating impact in difficult economic times; and

"Organizations such as the Ontario Home Builders' Association have estimated that harmonization would add \$15,000 in" new "taxes to the price of a new Ontario home;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, reject the harmonization of GST and RST," PST, "unless there are exemptions to offset the adverse impacts of harmonization so that the outcome will be a reduction in red tape, not higher taxes."

I'm pleased to sign and support this petition.

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Mr. Mike Colle: I have a petition on behalf of the workers of this province.

"Whereas the federal government's employment insurance surplus now stands at \$54 billion; and

"Whereas over 75% of Ontario's unemployed are not eligible for employment insurance because of Ottawa's unfair eligibility rules" for the workers in Ontario; and

"Whereas an Ontario worker has to work more weeks to qualify" for EI "and receives fewer weeks of benefits than other Canadian unemployed workers; and

"Whereas the" ordinary, "average Ontario unemployed worker gets \$4,000 less"—that's "less" with a big L—"in EI benefits than unemployed workers in other provinces and thus not qualifying for many retraining programs;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to press the federal government to reform the employment insurance program and to end the discrimination and unfairness towards Ontario's unemployed workers."

I am in solidarity with the unemployed workers and I affix my name to this petition.

ROAD SAFETY

Mr. Robert Bailey: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas there is an urgent need to stiffen the punishments for the Highway Traffic Act and the Ontario Provincial Offences Act regarding drivers who have been convicted of dangerous and/or careless driving who are repeat offenders; and

"Whereas the time has come to take measures to ensure that these offenders are held accountable to the highest level for their actions;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, respectfully petition the Parliament of Ontario as follows:

"That the government of Ontario pursue and raise the bar towards the punishment and convictions for the Highway Traffic Act and the Ontario Provincial Offences Act; and

"Whereas we petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to pursue the following:

"Redefine the Highway Traffic Act and Provincial Offences Act to provide a mandatory two years plus a day in a maximum facility for persons convicted of more than 10 Highway Traffic Act violations; and

"To provide a mandatory local driver's accident prevention and awareness program for persons convicted of two or more driving offences."

I agree with this petition and affix my name to it.

CEMETERIES

Mr. Jim Brownell: I have a petition that reads as follows.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontario's cemeteries are an important part of our cultural heritage, and Ontario's inactive cemeteries are constantly at risk of closure and removal; and

"Ontario's cemeteries are an irreplaceable part of the province's cultural heritage;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"The government must pass Bill 149, the Inactive Cemeteries Protection Act, 2009, to prohibit the relocation of inactive cemeteries in the province of Ontario."

As I agree with this petition, I shall sign it and send it to the clerks' table.

TAXATION

Mrs. Julia Munro: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the McGuinty government's plan to harmonize the PST and the GST will result in Ontario taxpayers paying 8% more for a multitude of products and services;

"Whereas the 8% tax increase will increase the cost of services such as housing and real estate services, gasoline, hydro bills, home heating fuel, Internet and cable bills, haircuts, gym memberships, legal services, construction and renovations, car repairs, plumbing and electrical services, landscaping services, leisure activities, hotel rooms, veterinary services for the family pet, and even funeral services; and

"Whereas Ontario taxpayers cannot afford this tax grab, particularly in the middle of a recession;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to direct the government of Ontario to abandon the sales tax increase announced in the 2009 budget."

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Bob Delaney: I have a petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly that was passed to me by Laura Petrison of Sidler and Co. in Meadowvale, and I'd like to read it. It goes as follows:

"Whereas wait times for access to surgical procedures in the western GTA area served by the Mississauga Halton LHIN are growing despite the ongoing capital project activity at the hospitals within the Mississauga Halton LHIN boundaries; and

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"Whereas 'day surgery' procedures could be" better "performed in an off-site facility. An ambulatory surgery centre would greatly increase the ability of surgeons to perform more procedures, reduce wait times for patients and free up operating theatre space in hospitals for more complex procedures that may require post-operative intensive care unit support and a longer length of stay in hospital;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care allocate funds in its 2009-10 capital budget to begin planning and construction of an ambulatory surgery centre located in western Mississauga to serve the Mississauga-Halton area and enable greater access to

'day surgery' procedures that comprise about four fifths of all surgical procedures performed."

I'm pleased to sign and support this petition, and to ask page David to carry it for me.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Gerry Martiniuk: I have a petition signed by good citizens of Cambridge, directed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, which reads:

"Whereas Cambridge Memorial Hospital and other hospitals in the Waterloo region are experiencing substantial increased demands due to population growth; and

"Whereas the McGuinty government's freeze on new long-term-care facilities has resulted in additional long-term-care patients in our hospitals; and

"Whereas the McGuinty government's cuts to hospital funding have resulted in a dangerous environment for patients and staff in Cambridge and across Ontario; and

"Whereas the approved new expansion of the hospital has been delayed by the McGuinty government and this has contributed to the funding shortfall;

"We, the undersigned, hereby petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"(1) That the McGuinty government meet its obligations to introduce a population-needs-based funding formula for hospitals as has been done in other Canadian provinces;

"(2) That the McGuinty government proceed immediately with the approved new expansion of Cambridge Memorial Hospital."

As I agree with the contents of this petition, I affix my name thereto.

CHILD CUSTODY

Mr. Jim Brownell: I have a petition signed by a number of residents from the city of Cornwall, including my daughter, believe it or not, and it reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"We, the people of Ontario, deserve and have the right to request an amendment to the Children's Law Reform Act to emphasize the importance of children's relationships with their parents and grandparents;

"Whereas subsection 20(2.1) requires parents and others with custody of children to refrain from unreasonably placing obstacles to personal relations between the children and their grandparents; and

"Whereas subsection 24(2) contains a list of matters that a court must consider when determining the best interests of a child. The bill amends that subsection to include a specific reference to the importance of maintaining emotional ties between children and grandparents; and

"Whereas subsection 24(2.1) requires a court that is considering custody of or access to a child to give effect to the principle that a child should have as much contact

with each parent and grandparent as is consistent with the best interests of the child; and

“Whereas subsection 24(2.2) requires a court that is considering custody of a child to take into consideration each applicant’s willingness to facilitate as much contact between the child and each parent and grandparent as is consistent with the best interests of the child;

“We, the undersigned, hereby petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to amend the Children’s Law Reform Act, as above, to emphasize the importance of children’s relationships with their parents and grandparents.”

As I agree with this petition, I shall sign it and send it to the clerks’ table.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. Ted Arnott: I have a petition to the Parliament of Ontario, and it reads as follows:

“Whereas Ontarians who now live in long-term-care homes are increasingly older, frailer and have greater complex care needs;

“Whereas our elder parents, family and friends deserve to live with dignity and respect;

“Whereas the McGuinty Liberal government failed to revolutionize long-term care and broke its promise to seniors to provide \$6,000 in personal care, per resident;

“Whereas five years of Liberal inaction has restricted Ontario’s ability to meet the demands of our aging population;

“Whereas more than 24,000 Ontarians are currently waiting for an LTC bed;

“Whereas Ontario funds significantly less resident care than Alberta, British Columbia, Manitoba and New Brunswick;

“Whereas dedicated LTC homes are short-staffed and have not been given resources to hire enough front-line workers to provide the level of care residents require;

“Whereas devoted LTC staff are burdened by cumbersome government regulations;

“Whereas some 35,000 seniors are living in LTC beds which do not meet more home-like design standards introduced in 1998 by the former PC government;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That the McGuinty government must enhance long-term care by:

—initiating a sector-wide staffing increase of 4,500 full-time positions within a year;

—expediting the redevelopment of Ontario’s 35,000 oldest long-term-care beds by providing adequate support and funding;

—achieving an average of three worked hours of personal care, per day, within a year;

—simplifying the regulations which govern nursing homes;

—producing a comprehensive plan with benchmarks to reduce long-term-care wait lists of more than 24,000 people;

“—addressing inflationary pressures by adequately funding the increased operating costs of long-term-care homes.”

I have affixed my signature and I support this.

CEMETERIES

Mr. Jim Brownell: I have more petitions relating to Bill 149, with a number signed by members of the Cornwall Township Historical Society. The petition reads as follows:

“Whereas Ontario’s cemeteries are an important part of our cultural heritage, and Ontario’s inactive cemeteries are constantly at risk of closure and removal; and

“Ontario’s cemeteries are an irreplaceable part of the province’s cultural heritage;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“The government must pass Bill 149, the Inactive Cemeteries Protection Act, 2009, to prohibit the re-location of inactive cemeteries in the province of Ontario.”

As I agree with this petition, I shall sign it and send it to the clerks’ table.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The time provided for petitions has expired.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS AMENDMENT ACT

(ORGAN DONOR LEAVE), 2009

LOI DE 2009 MODIFIANT LA LOI
SUR LES NORMES D’EMPLOI
(CONGÉ POUR DON D’ORGANE)

Mr. Fonseca moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 154, An Act to amend the Employment Standards Act, 2000 in respect of organ donor leave / Projet de loi 154, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2000 sur les normes d’emploi en ce qui concerne le congé pour don d’organe.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Debate?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: I’m going to be sharing my time with my parliamentary assistant, the member for Brampton West.

Just before I begin, let me say I’d like to thank the dedicated, hard-working staff at the Ministry of Labour who have worked on this important file, and in particular two staff members from my office, Melissa Banfield, senior policy adviser, and Dylan Blain, my legislative assistant.

Now I’d like to read a letter that was sent to the chair of the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly. The letter is from Jim O’Brien, the executive director of the Kidney Foundation of Canada, and it reads, “I am pleased to write on behalf of the Kidney Foundation of Canada, Ontario branch, in support of the Employment

Standards Amendment Act (Organ Donor Leave), 2009. The bill takes another important step forward in improving and removing barriers to living organ donation in Ontario."

He continues, "According to the Trillium Gift of Life Network, 1,654 Ontarians are currently waiting for an organ. Of those, 1,218, or 73.5%, are waiting for a kidney. Some will wait as long as 10 years, and some will die waiting.

"The rate of kidney transplantation has not kept pace with the growing transplant waiting list. In 2008, only 505 kidney transplants were performed in Ontario, 219 of those from living donors. The Kidney Foundation of Canada supports living organ donation."

I want to thank Jim and the rest of the hard-working staff and team of the Kidney Foundation.

But it is not only people awaiting a kidney. The unpaid, job-protected leave that we're proposing would also apply to employees who are donating all or part of their liver, lung, pancreas or small bowel.

Right now, there are almost 1,700 people on the organ waiting list. These are people who face the insecurity of knowing that their lives may be shortened without the gift of the replacement of an organ. These are people whose quality of life is diminished while they wait. With the passage of Bill 154, we can take action to lessen that doubt and uncertainty.

We need more people who are willing to donate an organ. Living organ donors comprise approximately 30% of total transplants. This bill, if passed, will assist those generous-hearted, compassionate-minded people who are prepared to make the gift of one of their organs to another. We can help lessen the extent of that sacrifice by ensuring that employees who want to donate have job-protected leave.

1600

Our government has already taken some steps towards making the province a national leader in enhancing and saving lives through organ donation for transplantation. These steps are contained in an announcement we made in 2007 setting out up to \$4 million to implement an organ donation strategy. This strategy includes the establishment of the program for reimbursing expenses of living organ donors that the Ministry of Health started. And I would like to take this opportunity to thank the minister and the Ministry of Health for their hard work and assistance on this file. This is a fund that reimburses living organ donors for reasonable, out-of-pocket expenses, as well as a lost-income subsidy associated with their organ donation. The purpose of the fund is to remove potential financial barriers faced by living organ donors. The fund complements our proposed legislation.

We're now looking forward to taking the next step to support our commitment and our overall strategy to encourage living organ donations in Ontario. The purpose of Bill 154 is to remove employment-related barriers to living organ donations.

Here's what Dr. Frank Markel, president and CFO of the Trillium Gift of Life Network, has to say: "Let me give you two other reasons why I think this bill is so

important. Today, absent the bill, an individual who has decided to be a living donor essentially has to ask a favour of his or her employer, has to ask for leave. I don't think anyone should have to go to their employer to ask for leave if they're being generous enough to donate an organ." I couldn't agree more.

If passed, Bill 154 would help increase life-saving transplants and reduce wait times for patients on the organ transplant waiting list. It would also assist in reducing health care costs.

Organ donors are caring and compassionate people. Job-protected leave for organ donors would provide support for those kind-hearted Ontarians who are giving the gift of life to others.

Ontarians want to donate. In November 2006, this government commissioned the Citizens Panel on Increasing Organ Donations. The purpose of this panel was to survey the public on their views about organ donation and to find ways to improve and increase organ donations in Ontario. The panel's recommendations focused on such things as improving awareness of the importance of organ donations and removing barriers to those donations. This bill is based on the recommendations from that citizens' panel when they looked at job security and what should be provided. Donors wanted a guarantee that their jobs would be protected while undergoing surgery for the purposes of organ donation. We listened and we responded with Bill 154. So we're moving forward.

For the individuals needing the donation of an organ, this is an enormous matter. For that good person willing to literally give of themselves, it is a concern of no small consequence.

What I would emphasize is that the effect on businesses and employers would be relatively small. The specifics of this legislation are straightforward. The bill provides 13 weeks of unpaid leave for an employee making an organ donation. This leave can be extended to an additional 13 weeks with medical documentation. An employee requesting this leave must be employed with the same employer for at least 13 weeks, which is consistent with some of the other leaves under the Employment Standards Act. And they must provide at least two weeks' written notice to their employer before beginning and extending the leave. Employees would also be responsible for providing their employer with a medical certificate confirming the surgery has been requested.

The provisions in this proposed legislation are fair and reasonable to both employees and employers. Living organ donors are an increasingly important source of organs for life-saving transplants, comprising approximately 30% of the total transplants in Ontario. In fiscal year 2007-08, out of approximately 863 transplants that were completed, 260 came from living organ donors.

As I said earlier, there are almost 1,700 people on the organ donation waiting list in our province. Living organ donation has many advantages, such as reduced wait times, reduced patient suffering, increased transplant success and reduced health care costs. The health care needs of individuals requiring an organ are typically

reduced following a successful organ transplant. For example, the Citizens Panel on Increasing Organ Donations report noted that overall it cost the health care system \$30,000 to \$50,000 a year less to maintain a transplant patient than it does to maintain the same person on dialysis. That's good news for all involved.

One thing is abundantly clear: There should not be an employment-related barrier to these life-saving procedures, especially when that barrier can be removed. The McGuinty government is acting to make our province a leader in enhancing and saving lives through organ donation for transplantation. Here's what Dr. Gary Levy, director of the transplant program at the University Health Network had to say: "Any effort to encourage Ontarians to give the gift of life must be supported. On behalf of the transplant community throughout Ontario, we applaud all elements of the government and thank you for taking this bold step."

If we do not take action, if we do not seek to address a potential barrier to living organ donation—namely, job-protected leave—there is a risk that the number of living organ donations would stagnate. If we do not take action, we would not be recognizing the compassion of the donors and the self-sacrifice they make to others. Donors should not have to worry about their jobs because they're involved in such a needed and selfless act to protect the life of someone else.

The writer Thomas Merton once said, "The whole idea of compassion is based on a keen awareness of the interdependence of all ... living beings, which are all part of one another, and all involved in one another." This bill recognizes that interdependence that both compassion and civil society are based on and rely on.

Today, we have the opportunity to move Ontario forward and increase organ donations. This is just one part of an overall initiative to increase organ donations. Bill 154 would provide the job-protected leave that people say they need. It would be one less thing for organ donors to have to concern themselves with. The people of Ontario want to reduce barriers to organ donations and increase the number of organ donors. Let us move forward. Let us carry out the wishes of the people of Ontario and pass this bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Robert Bailey: It's my pleasure to rise today and participate in the debate on Bill 154.

As the official opposition, we are supportive of this bill, as it offers job protection to people who offer to donate certain organs and become living organ donors. The Ontario Progressive Conservative caucus is supportive of any initiative that increases the rate of organ donations in Ontario.

The Trillium Gift of Life Network was founded by the Mike Harris government as part an initiative to increase awareness and coordinate organ donations. As was pointed out by previous speakers, at the Trillium Gift of Life Network there are approximately 1,700 people currently on the waiting list for organ donations. The wait-

ing list has been reduced since 2004 but has remained more or less the same.

1610

Interjection.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Okay; sorry.

I'd like to commend the minister for his remarks. I hope to say a little more later in the debate.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Minister, you have two minutes to respond, if you choose.

Hon. Peter Fonseca: Sure. Why not?

I'd like to thank the member for Sarnia for his comments on the importance of this bill. We know that there are many individuals in Ontario suffering, waiting for an organ donation, and if we can make it a little easier for those who are living organ donors to be able to do so, to give that gift of life, by giving them that job-protected leave, that is what we are meant to do as legislators. We are here to erase barriers that are before worthy initiatives, of compassion, caring and love. These are family members, our friends, or those who have read about stories sometimes in the newspaper and have said, "I've got to do something. I want to do something. I want to give part of my organ. To be able to do that, I also want to know that the government of Ontario is behind me, protecting me, supporting me," and that's what we want to do. We are doing that through this bill, and I hope it receives support from all members in this House.

I know that all of us have been touched by a friend or family member who has needed an organ donation and how it touches the community. It is the type of community that we want to build, one where we understand our interdependence, where we share. The greatest gift is when we can give part of ourselves to help someone else live.

I want to again thank the member from Sarnia and all those who have spoken in favour of this bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mr. Robert Bailey: I'll start in where one of my seat-mates passed me a note and corrected what part of the debate we are in. I apologize for that.

Where I left off, as I said, the PC caucus intends to support this bill. We think it's timely. Currently, approximately 40% of the kidney donations done in Ontario come from living donors and approximately a third of liver transplants come from living donors. Currently, there are approximately 1,100 people on waiting list for kidney transplants and around 300 people waiting for a liver in Ontario.

Although I am supportive of this bill and we will be voting for it, this is not going to do much to reduce the waiting lists for organ donations. I don't believe that anyone has ever been fired for wanting to be an organ donor, so I'm not convinced that there's that great a problem there.

What it does do, though, is remedy the current situation where, if you want to be a living donor, you have to

ask a favour of your employer. Dr. Markel of the Trillium Gift of Life Network pointed out in committee that women don't need to ask a favour of their employers when they go on maternity leave, so why should it be any different for organ transplants?

It offers a level of protection that's not there now. I suppose it will offer peace of mind to potential donors, and that is something that needs to be supported. What the government needs to do, though, is fix the current situation to make it easier for people to donate.

Ontario currently has the lowest rate of deceased organ donations in North America. I was shocked to find out that a few years ago the member for Newmarket–Aurora proposed a private member's bill that would have required people, when they apply for a health card or a driver's licence, to indicate whether they wish to be an organ donor or not. You would have to make a conscious decision at that time whether to donate or not.

I am supportive of anything that gets the issue of organ donations to top of mind. I think that is the only way we will get more donors. The member from Durham said that when he came in on the transit system this morning, he noticed that there's quite a bit of advertising now on the TTC about organ donation. So it's top of mind with a number of people today.

Again, you're not going to find anyone who's opposed to this bill. I was impressed at committee by the tremendous sense of mission of those involved in the transplant community around Ontario. They are certainly passionate advocates for organ donation programs and generally want to see the donation rates increased.

While we're all supportive of the bill, there were many concerns raised that are also important. Dr. Levy from the Toronto General Hospital transplant unit had the following to say about the effects of our low organ donation rates: "The low deceased-donor rates in Ontario have had devastating consequences, and I can speak to that because I just came from a clinic. Wait times for transplantation are up to nine years for a kidney and two to three years for a liver." I was interested when he stated, "Every day at least one Ontarian dies waiting for a life-saving transplant, and 25% of listed liver and lung transplant recipients die before an organ becomes available." Hopefully this legislation will shorten some of those lists and give some of those people a better outlook and opportunity for a full life.

Dr. Levy did go on to talk about a vibrant living-donor program that has helped to make up for the shortage of deceased donors, but it is just part of the picture.

The committee also heard from Dr. Ted Boadway, who chaired the Citizens Panel on Increasing Organ Donations. The panel made a series of recommendations on ways to increase organ donations. Dr. Boadway said, "We actually put quite a complex series of recommendations in the report, which were related to what we can do with the public, what we can do with changing some of our laws to facilitate it, what we can do in hospitals, and what we can do with health professionals. We think there are a whole bunch of areas that each have to

be addressed.... I think you have to approach it as a broad spectrum issue. You have to see what you can do in each one of these areas."

It was clear from all of the presenters—and I've just named a few here—that this one step is not going to increase the rate of organ donations alone. In order to do that, you need to be talking, advocating and educating the public all the time. It seems to me that education on this issue is the key to increased organ donations. On behalf of the official opposition, I would encourage the government to act on the other recommendations of the citizens panel so this isn't done as a one-off basis, but as Dr. Boadway said, a broad spectrum issue.

I would encourage the government to support the motion of the member from Newmarket–Aurora's private member's bill from a few years ago that would force people to make a conscious decision about whether or not they wanted to donate an organ. I can't help but think that we should be looking for ways to make organ donation top of mind for everyone. There may be different ways you can do that, but I think that any step that we may take as government or opposition in Ontario and other groups, anything we can do to raise awareness is something that should be supported. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments? Further debate? Any other member wish to speak?

Mr. Fonseca has moved third reading of Bill 154. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be named as in the motion.

Third reading agreed to.

EDUCATION AMENDMENT ACT (KEEPING OUR KIDS SAFE AT SCHOOL), 2009

LOI DE 2009 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR L'ÉDUCATION (SÉCURITÉ DE NOS ENFANTS À L'ÉCOLE)

Resuming the debate adjourned on May 26, 2009, on the motion for third reading of Bill 157, An Act to amend the Education Act / Projet de loi 157, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'éducation.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate? The member from Burlington.

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I really appreciate the opportunity to continue my comments from yesterday.

I will begin where I left off, and it is with a quote. It is an impact statement by a family member whose brother was sexually assaulted in a school. I will begin the quote.

"My brother disclosed to my mother over two years ago that he had suffered student-on-student sexual abuse.

"After he shared what had been happening, we would continually inform the people who were supposed to be protecting us about" what was happening and "what was

still happening with regards to the perpetrator's actions and how we were feeling.

"To me, it seemed like the people in charge were more interested in covering up the perpetrator's actions, because they did nothing to make it better. That's why we had more downs than ups that year.

1620

"It also seemed like the principal only cared about covering up the perpetrator's actions and ignoring all policies that were put in place to protect the victim.

"In situations like this the principal and her advisers should be telling the victim and their family what is being done to protect the victim.

"Unfortunately, we got the exact opposite from a lot of people including the principal, TDSB safe schools advisers, social workers, and the trustees.

"These people were not contacting us about any changes they were making.

"The only thing that was happening is lies being made up to try and cover up how they didn't follow policies.

"If these people did their job as policies tell them to, the outcomes most likely would have been different.

"There may have been less suffering and my family would not have to continually be demanding justice and accountability.

"There were a lot of things done without following policies.

"This is what I think should have happened.

"A safety plan should have went into effect the day after my brother disclosed, a suspension and further expulsion should have occurred, the perpetrator and not the victim should have been changing their daily school routines.

"The agencies to assist childhood perpetrators should have been notified immediately to assist this child with his behaviour to protect others.

"There also should have been lots of encouragement from those around the victim and their family.

"As the school year progressed and this child was allowed to continue harassing my brother with no consequences, my mom would tell us that we would be leaving the school.

"The sad part of this is that we did nothing wrong. I think it is wrong that our family were the ones pushed out of their own school.

"It was really hard to see my mother constantly crying.

"My father did not show as much emotion, even though I knew inside he was crumbling.

"A lot of people were constantly upset and terribly worried about my brother.

"Due to the constant stress that my family was forced to endure, this also took away from the things that we used to do together. We were not able to get out as much as we used to, and be a family.

"When my brother and I began attending our new school, the beginning was very hard for all of us, especially my brother.

"He was afraid to go to school in general because he had memories from his old one.

"He had fears of making friends, going to the bathroom, communicating with his teachers and much more.

"He also always seemed like his mind was somewhere else; flashbacks of what had happened at his previous school.

"This affected me as well. I was constantly with my brother at recesses because he was afraid to interact with boys his own age.

"When I was not there, he would stand up against the wall alone.

"This created some difficulty in making new friends and talking to girls my own age.

"It's difficult for me because I am unable to share with any of my friends what our family went through, but I am able to talk to my teachers at my new school about our family's experiences and they help me.

"My brother was having lots of nightmares and flashbacks about everything that had happened after he told.

"My brother is afraid to go into a room of our house without one of us.

"He has also become very withdrawn and guarded at school and is fearful of trusting adults in the school system.

"He is always on guard in the hallway, the schoolyard and classroom. These are some of the impacts of what happened to him.

"Every day after school when my mother asks us how our day was, my brother's response is, 'It was bad because I had to go to school.'

"Unfortunately for my brother, he had a lot of adults betray him.

"I also think he is afraid of going to them because he is scared that they are going to betray him again.

"If certain people did their job, no one would be in this mess and there would have been no cover-ups and lies made.

"I also wouldn't have had to write a victim impact statement, because the person who tormented my brother all year would have been removed earlier, without our family having to go to the media to get something done."

These are life-altering events that we're talking about, not just a school tussle on the playground. The student being referred to here will be dealing with the lifelong trauma of the incident. The incident itself was traumatic enough, but it has been unnecessarily compounded by negligence on the part of the school's administration. Because of that negligence, this young boy does not trust adults, and who can blame him? The very people charged with the duty to keep him safe betrayed him time and time again, and now he has difficulty trusting.

When I asked the minister in this Legislature why she refused to take action to address this situation, she indicated that it was "an isolated incident." Well, I disagree, because I know how much courage it takes to stand up for an issue like this and continue to get up again and fight after somebody knocks you down, particularly when you are dealing with a delicate situation that involves minors. I also know that when one person steps forward, many more didn't, or couldn't, publicly

raise the issue. I have heard unspeakable stories from all corners of the province.

In London, a duo of dynamic women have actually taken it upon themselves to offer support to those parents and families that are dealing with student-on-student violence and abuse. Here is the story of London Anti-Bullying Coalition in their words, and why real accountability and consequences are so important to be included in Bill 157:

"Five years ago, a freelance journalist, having heard the similar tales of our families' struggles with bullying in our schools, arranged for" us "to meet. Initially, we provided emotional support to each other as we struggled to work within the system to resolve our concerns and found ourselves getting nowhere. It was the news of the tragic suicide of a local teenager, followed by the denial of the principal that his school had a bullying problem, that propelled us towards the formation of the London Anti-Bullying Coalition. Listening to the boy's father, Mr. Melo, talk about cutting his son out of a tree and witnessing the pain that we only too recently ourselves had avoided led us to the mantra, 'Never again shall we lose a child to bullying!'

"Within three hours of announcing the formation of the London Anti-Bullying Coalition on a local radio station, we received 12 phone calls. I have listed a few of the concerns that were brought to our attention.

"A teenager was set on fire getting off the school bus. During the period that followed, while both the school principal and the bus line were assigning responsibility to each other for keeping this child safe, the young man was set on fire a second time, which led the bus driver to advise the parents to put their child on another bus, as he could not guarantee that their son would arrive home safely.

"A seven-year-old female was lured into a corner of her school playground, held down and sexually assaulted, resulting in a vaginal infection and suicidal ideation. All of the children were aware of what they called 'the gross corner'; why weren't the staff? The response to the mother by the principal when she sought assistance was, 'To be fair, your daughter started a kissing club.' The principal's solution was to send the daughter back to school. Because it was winter, she had snow pants on and she'd be safe on the playground.

"As a result of a five-year-old boy being terrorized on the playground daily until he is so anxious that he throws up before school, the father films the playground and shows the video to the principal, who refuses to view the material. The next time the father is filming the playground, the principal calls in a false report of a suspected pedophile and three police cruisers arrive with lights and sirens going to stop the father from filming.

"A mother who was concerned with sexually inappropriate behaviour of a teacher and was demanding resolution is banned from her children's school and is not allowed to attend her daughter's grade 8 graduation.

1630

"Under the mentorship of David Millen from the Ottawa Anti-Bullying Coalition, we held a media con-

ference to announce the formation. Our media conference was attended by John and Maria Melo, Mike Neuts and Cindy Wesley, all of whom lost a child due to this issue and strongly supported the formation of a parents' voice advocacy group.

"At our town hall meeting the next week, we were surprised, as the 40 attendees we expected turned into 120 participants. We were a little overwhelmed. It seems like people thought we were already established and came looking for support, but here we were, just two moms who felt like we were in over our heads. It was made apparent that our community was fed up and looking for some answers. TVO was in attendance filming for their documentary *Battling Bullies*, which was nominated for a Gemini award and featured families who became political as a result of the system's failure to protect their children.

"The LABC does not hear success stories; the LABC hears stories of situations being unaddressed and of policies and procedures either being ignored or used incorrectly. The LABC has been told that the ministry does not micromanage their boards, and the boards state that they do not micromanage their administrators. Is it micromanaging to expect adherence to policy? Is it micromanaging to place accountability pieces into legislation? Is it micromanaging to consequence an administration that, despite adequate training, fails to respond to parents in a positive, collaborative way? We don't think so.

"When policy and procedure fail, when the victim is blamed for being provocative, when the incident is overlooked because 'boys will be boys,' when parents are forced to seek alternative education for their children or are simply told that if their children stopped twitching, being gay, eating, reacting to the situation, it would improve, then who's responsible for making it right? At this point, no one is. Parents who contact the ministry are given no redress. Parents who contact their boards are offered no hope. Situations that are handled inappropriately by their schools are not remedied, and those who failed them are not held accountable. Where do parents go when the three systems appear to collude with each other to avoid accountability?

"Without exception, our membership reports that they have been made to feel like overly involved, overly sensitive, unreasonable parents. They have been advised to teach their children some street smarts, enrol them in outside-of-school activities to help rebuild their damaged self-esteem, and to safety-plan with their child alternate routes to walk—to reach a place where bullying is dealt with the right way all the time and angry parents don't have to form political movements.

"In the end, if no accountability or support for the victim is built into legislation, we will continue to assist parents navigating the bullying maze and we will continue to lobby our officials to ensure safety for all students."

Clearly, these are not isolated incidents: 120 people showing up from one community in Ontario goes far

beyond isolated. I have trouble reading some of the solutions that were offered to these parents: "Put your child on another bus," said the bus driver, "because I can't keep them safe"; having her wear snow pants so she won't get sexually assaulted; and banning the parents from school activities because they have had to resort to the extreme to keep their children safe. This is not one principal and it isn't one school, so you tell me how your lightweight bill will stop this from happening.

In committee, I asked the London Anti-Bullying Coalition if Bill 157 would prevent these situations from happening in the future, and their response was, "No. Kids will still fall through the cracks."

My caucus colleague the member from Thornhill asked them to define "mandatory reporting" as they would like to see it defined in the act. They responded with: "What we would like is to make sure that when an incident is reported—it must be mandatory. We have trouble explaining to our parents that there is a difference between conflict and bullying. When it is truly bullying, we want the child to be able to report it to a teacher. We understand that teachers report to principals, but our parents want to know, if the principal does not do their part, where do they go next?"

"Truly, if 'shall' means 'shall,' then we'd like to see 'shall' mean 'shall,' because we have seen 'shall' mean 'perhaps' and we've seen 'shall' mean 'possibly.' So if no one is prepared to change the wording to 'must' and then say, 'If you do not do it, here is what happens,' if no one is prepared to do that—if 'shall' means 'shall,' then we need to see 'shall'—really does—"mean shall," and it's interpreted in the right way. I agree with the London Anti-Bullying Coalition, and we have seen this Liberal government take liberties with the interpretation of the meaning of "shall" in the past. Unfortunately for students across Ontario, I don't see this leopard changing its spots any time soon.

Another brave parent has continued to fight for justice for her son and changes to a system that robbed him of his high school experience, and I will now read from her presentation. She told our committee: "My name is Karen Sebben, and my family and I live in York region. I have my son Daniel here with me today as well, my moral support. Daniel wants to be present simply because the outcome of this bill will ultimately reflect on the safety of future students. It's too late for him, but he wholeheartedly supports any student who has lived the experiences he has. To be fearful of your life and contemplate suicide is too much to bear at any age, let alone at a young age and in an environment he expected to be safe in. As a result, he lost his high school years, which is something he can't get back.

"I'm here today because of my dissatisfaction with our government as it relates to the emotional and physical well-being of some of our schoolchildren, and our own personal history as it relates to a school system that I feel is fundamentally in need of change.

"Parents in our region often have to deal with school and administrative reluctance to get involved with ex-

cessive bullying issues. Board administrators often use legislation that is built around individual cases and 'schools know best' policies on how to deal with excessive bullying and student-on-student violence as an excuse for non-compliance in many cases." This is more widespread than we'd like to believe.

"Clear legislative language that is not up for interpretation and clear actions defined in this legislation on how to deal with bullying and student-on-student violence issues are needed to ensure streamlined board and school compliance.

"I have concerns with certain language like 'shall' as opposed to 'will'—that has since been clarified—and 'as soon as reasonably possible' as opposed to a clearly defined time limitation. The language in this bill is open-ended and subject to different interpretations. A clear course of action is desperately needed to fix the problems this legislation was intended to tackle. It is required, should there ever be a difference of opinion between a principal and the legal guardian of a child. A time limitation would offer something definitive and, further, it would provide the principal with a support mechanism as his or her actions would not be called into question.

"Bill 157 is flawed in that it leaves reporting to police to the discretion of principals. What you and I deem 'a serious nature' may differ and it sends two messages. Firstly, if an incident is not reported to the police, the aggressor may not suffer the consequences necessary. Secondly, a message is sent to the victim that his or her worth within the school community is of no importance.

1640

"The Ontario Principals' Council has stated that 'criminalizing students for their involvement in minor altercations is an overreaction.' I disagree. Our Criminal Code is clear. If there is an act of aggression or even a minor altercation that falls within the list of offences included as grounds for suspension or expulsion, then it is not a minor altercation and police must be called. We can all remember the young boy who had a belt taken to him by two older students. It was assault, pure and simple. How will accountability be addressed if a parent feels that police should have been called, but the principal, using discretion, made the decision not to" call them?

"Ms. Sandals has also stated that mandatory reporting to police is clear and that all school boards have police protocols that comply with provincial guidelines and therefore did not need to be included in" this "legislation. I disagree for the following reason: I took the time to meet with my police" service "to discuss the protocol and to specifically find out how they would deal with a criminal situation if it takes place in a school community as opposed to the mall parking lot. I was told that the same situation in either location would be treated the same and that extrajudicial measures would be followed.

"As a result of that meeting with police, I had discussions with teachers at the high school level who work closely with their beat police. These beat police have made it very clear that there have been instances in

the past where they would have liked to proceed with laying criminal charges but advised that school administration was tying their hands. Since when does school administration dictate how our police" service "does its job, and further, as a parent, how do I digest this conflicting information?

"On March 23, 2009, Minister Wynne stated, 'We remain committed to helping all kids reach their potential.' She further stated that, 'The only way that we will ensure safety for all of our students at school is if all people involved in students' lives take responsibility and work together.' Indeed, and well said. It takes a community to raise a child, but I don't understand how this can be accomplished with open-ended and unclear language within our legislation and police" service "confusion on how to uphold the Criminal Code on school grounds.

"I firmly believe it is every child's right to receive a safe education. Differences between our children shouldn't matter. It shouldn't matter if that child is gifted or with special learning needs, but it does matter if that child is an aggressor or victim. Our safe schools legislation thus far is very clear in that the focus of our government is for the benefit of the aggressors of our school communities.

"Teachers have told me that when they routinely intervene as they come across negative or disrespectful behaviour that requires disciplinary measures, they are not always supported and discipline is not always followed through with at the administration level. This cannot be considered working together. What accountability can a parent expect if consequences for the negative behaviour of a student are not followed through with on an administrative level?

"Currently within Bill 212, there are procedures in place to assist aggressors within our school communities to remain in school and move forward with their education. It's a good step and it's necessary, but Bill 212 does not speak to all kids.... The safe schools action team, in their report of December 11, made good recommendations relating to victims. It is a shame that out of these recommendations, Bill 157, if passed, will not address removing the alleged aggressors. In our personal situation, the fact that the aggressor remained in my son's school exacerbated the degree of unacceptable risk he endured. What does our Ministry of Education intend to do with some or all of the very good recommendations put forth by the safe schools action team? For example, in our area, prior to Bill 112:

"Discretionary Expulsion Criteria....

"(ii) the student has engaged in an activity (on or off school property) that causes the student's continuing presence in the school to create an unacceptable risk to the physical or mental well-being of another person(s) in the school or board.'

"In our situation, an unacceptable risk to our son was most definitely present. The injurious behaviour from his aggressor continued for three years. My child was under the care of an outside psychologist and my school admin-

istration was aware of this. The aggressor's continued presence in that same school as my son for three years created an unacceptable risk to the physical and mental well-being of my child. As a result of policy not being followed, the consequences that the aggressor endured did nothing to change the behaviour and the aggressor remained at school and continued to learn; my child continued to decline academically and emotionally. He became suicidal and to this day still suffers from chronic stress.

"There was a board policy displayed on the website. It was plain and clear for any parent like me to read and understand, yet my child endured for three years. It's either policy to be adhered to or it's not policy. What is the purpose of an operational policy if it is not adhered to by administration on grounds of discretion and interpretation?

"I wrote to Minister Wynne on a number of occasions to request that she direct the safe schools action team to consider the possible lifelong ramifications of a once academically successful and happy student who has become a student at risk as a direct result of student-on-student violence. At the same time, I explained our personal plight. I received no direct answer; I received no empathy or sympathy from the minister; I received no acknowledgment that something, somewhere went wrong; and I certainly received no accountability. I received Bill 157, which is clearly devoid of any type of accountability due to the lack of clear action and directions needed to address the problems that our school system currently faces.

"Ms. Sandals has also stated in the past that 'sadly, we know there are young people who do not feel safe.' If this is truly unacceptable, why did the ministry allow my son to continue looking over his shoulder for three long years while he attempted to learn—three long years of waiting to see that he mattered? He's not the only student who has experienced this, and he won't be the last.

"In conclusion, I would like to state that I have a difficult time believing that local school boards and their officials, once granted the right to interpret this legislation, will ever actually coincide with the spirit of this bill or this committee. I'd like to take the opportunity of thanking the committee for attending here today and for listening to our family experience, which happened as a direct result of discretionary powers."

I hope the government recognizes the theme here. It is one of inaction and avoidance by their school boards, of negligence by some principals and failure to enforce consequences by the ministry. It is also clear that our schools are not consulting with law enforcement in the way they should. Protecting our children should be proactive and preventive as much as responding to current situations. Law enforcement gets it. That was clear in Constable Decker's deputation made on behalf of Toronto Police Service during the hearings.

I would like to quote some of the shocking statistics that Constable Decker brought forward. He said, "Half of the victims of hate crimes in Canada are between the ages of 12 and 24.

"Two thirds of all persons accused of commission of a hate crime in Canada are between the ages of 12 and 24.

"Educational facilities rank second among hate crime offence locations."

So despite the fact that these statistics exist, when a principal is confronted by a student who has been abused or assaulted, they fail to report to the proper authorities. According to Constable Decker, "Crime prevention traditionally employs a number of key strategies. Some of those are targeting key sites of violence—if hate crime is very much a youth phenomenon, we need to go into schools; early prevention and intervention," he said. And do you know what? I heartily agree with Constable Decker on prevention through education.

There are sections of this bill that hopefully will have an impact on hate crime through education. However, behaviour that is not addressed becomes accepted behaviour. This is what I worry about. Not only do we have students who have been assaulted and abused and received no support or protection, but we have witnesses to these crimes who saw their school administration do nothing.

1650

What kind of impact does that have on deterring students from committing future acts of violence? In fact, you will most likely see an escalation of violence in those schools because there have been no consequences imposed and the administration turns a blind eye to the incident.

I am in agreement with the Ontario Principals' Council when they say, "The bill also needs to require that all staff in schools must be responsible for such interventions at all times during the school day. This would apply whether the staff member is teaching, on a scheduled break or on a prep period in any area of the school."

The problem that many of the parents encountered after their children were abused was that the school failed to enforce the safety plan. So these students are being victimized, put at risk and their trust in those charge with their protection is then shattered.

The PC caucus put forward an amendment that requires the development and enforcement of a safety plan. Of course, this was shot down by the Liberal members on the committee.

I also concur with the Ontario Principals' Council that, "The legislation should clearly define the term 'intervention' and should include the responsibility to address the situation in the moment and discipline in the moment."

Many of the parents who have come forward cite a delayed reaction to the incident that has further exacerbated a difficult situation. Their suggestion also speaks to the lack of clarity in Bill 157. You would think that an education bill designed to keep our kids safe would be clear and concise. I don't believe that this is the case.

In response to a question from my colleague from Thornhill about removing the power from parents, Mr. Naeem Siddiq of the Ontario Principals' Council said, "I would suggest that we are quite comfortable with the role

of parenting. I would suggest that the Education Act even asks us to do that." I find this statement quite troubling, as did my colleague.

One of the fundamental points of this bill from our perspective is that parents deserve to be notified, and in the cases we have been made aware of, this did not happen. Principals are not substitutes for parents, nor should they assume that they could be. This concept needs to be challenged and a culture shift should occur.

The Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario said, "It makes sense to have a clear protocol to report serious incidents that occur at school. It's important for parents and guardians to be notified in a timely fashion of such incidents.... There should be clear expectations that adults in the school intervene when they witness inappropriate behaviour that negatively affects the school climate."

We don't just need a protocol; we need consequences in place for when the protocol fails, as it obviously has many times.

The Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario also believes that "all forms of student-to-student violence and student-to-teacher violence should be documented and placed in the student's OSR through the use of a violent incident form. These forms should describe the incident, state the resolution or remedial measures taken with the student, and indicate whether the police or other agencies were involved and whether further education or action is necessary. This type of documentation will also provide teachers with the necessary knowledge and ability to monitor a student's progress and prepare an individual program designed to ensure the student's future success."

This failure to document does not impact just the current victim and abuser. The failure to document serious incidents of student-on-student violence and abuse has contributed to more than one student falling prey to that same abuser. The first incident may not have been preventable, but the second assault definitely could have been, and the fault lies in this reporting mechanism, or lack thereof.

This position is confirmed by David Clegg, president of the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario: "All too often, particularly when students transfer schools, the OSR is vital for the receiving teacher to understand the needs of that student. We've found, too many times, that issues regarding students coming into the school pertaining to their behaviour, particularly violent behaviour, are not part of the OSR record. This allows opportunities for, unfortunately, incidents to recur where foreknowledge potentially could have prevented that."

Well, this isn't rocket science. We heartily agree, and this would have made a world of difference to all these cases.

I would like to reference Ms. Martha Mackinnon's deputation from Justice for Children and Youth. Ms. Mackinnon said, "If everyone in the school system were honestly doing all of their job all of the time every day, we probably wouldn't even need this legislation."

She hit the nail right on the head. But unfortunately, human nature says differently.

The deputation by the Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association referenced the fact that, "Often, our teachers and our principals ... are not equipped to deal with ... specific problems."

No one is asking them to. In fact, the PC caucus asked for the right support systems to be called in for both the victim and the abuser. Every board has access to psychiatrists and professional personnel that are trained to deal with trauma, violence and abuse. We want to see these professionals immediately deployed as part of the victim's safety plan and the abuser's rehabilitation strategy.

The Liberals, for some reason, disagreed. This bill is really an insult to teachers, because they have been reporting these incidents, they have been doing their due diligence and the buck stops in the principal's office.

Mr. Ryan, from the Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association, confirmed this in his statement to the committee:

"I'll have to speak out of my experience as a classroom teacher, having been in the classroom less than two years ago. Quite often, our members do experience that: They report an incident, they often document it, and in some cases where, let's say, there's a suspension, they get paperwork back and they'll get communication. In many cases, however, they don't know what has happened, especially at the secondary level. There is no communication back to them. When I was a staff rep in the school, on the issue of child welfare cases with children's aid and Catholic children's aid and Jewish family services, I'd ... have to tell them that it's not good enough to just take the principal's word that they've reported to these agencies. You have to make sure, because they're liable in those cases. But many colleagues have reported to me that they've gotten no feedback on it."

Feedback is critical. Why operate in a vacuum of information when you have teachers who care and want to be engaged in helping these students, but their hands are tied? The Ministry of Education needs to send a strong directive through the system that deploys and engages all resources to protect our most precious assets, our children.

I am not only surprised but mortified by the experiences of parents in our education system that were brought forward by the Canadian Children's Rights Council. The following statement speaks to the way the education system has kept parents in the dark and on the fringe of their children's experience. They stated: "Schools even tell parents that they aren't allowed to see the school records...."

"There needs to be an inclusion in all of this of the primary caregiver of the child, which is both parents. Any reporting that's done should be open and transparent to the parents; it should be available to them. They should be able to look at all of this, which is part of the school records. They should be able to look at any of this. Anything that's been written down by any teacher, as far

as we're concerned, is part of the school record and should be open to these parents to evaluate. It's their job to take care of the children, and it's their children first"—yet another example of how the school system believes they are better parents than the parents themselves.

The important part of this scenario, particularly in the custody arrangements, is that both parents have access to the information. They can't always both go to the office at the same time, but they can read the same report and make a decision based on that information. Too much—in fact, all of the critical details—is left to policy and regulation.

1700

The committee has abdicated its responsibility to give clear and strong direction on so many of the issues that have been raised through these deputations.

I cannot support the bill as it stands, a bill that does not include direction to document actions, to follow up, to require mandatory notification to parents or guardians, that does not require a report filed with the superintendent and that does not require a mandatory safety plan to be developed with the parents and guardians. This is a huge opportunity lost again, and shamefully—shamefully—at the expense of our children in our Ontario education system who find themselves first victimized by a fellow student and then victimized by the very system that they and their families rely on for protection. Until the Minister of Education, the education Premier and this Liberal government take seriously the information that these victims have so courageously brought forward, I will not support this legislation.

I want to thank the heroes who have told their most painful stories in the hope that this Liberal government would require mandatory reporting for student-on-student violence so that others won't have to be victimized and fall through the cracks as a result of this system.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Julia Munro: I would just like to congratulate the member for Burlington on the amount of research and contact that she has developed over the time of this bill and its passage. Very clearly, as I mentioned in remarks I made last week, there is a gap. The minister acknowledged a gap, but it would seem, at the end of third reading, that there are still issues that have yet to be resolved. I think that when you have a bill that has engendered so much public outpouring—an outpouring of what is ostensibly of a private nature—where people have felt the importance of coming before a committee in the public domain of Hansard and brought forward their stories, it's a demonstration that, quite frankly, there is a lot more to do.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: I listened intensely to our critic, Ms. Savoline. The arguments that the member from Burlington made were substantive, putting on the record those claims. But here's the simple point that I have: Parents do have the right to know. That's exactly what

I'm saying. This is mandatory reporting of school violence. That can take many forms: mental, physical, social—you name it. But here's the point: I believe that in the partnership of the school, the community and the child, the parent cannot be left out. Of course, there are parents of varying degrees of capacity, intelligence, wealth etc., but so are there in all of the other partners. No one's perfect in this group. If there are concerns that by telling the parent the child could be at risk, I understand that, and there needs to be intervention there and other actions taken, I suppose. But in all cases, to think that the parents shouldn't know of an event at school, either where they were the victim or the perpetrator—the parents have the right to know. That's really all I want to say.

No one is for violence in schools. No one is. That's antiquated, outdated, unacceptable, whatever. But I think your arguments were well made, and often these things aren't handled by any of those stakeholders. The educators themselves may have a Ph.D. in mathematics. That does not mean they're a psychologist or an interventionist or a mediator or anything like that. I'm just saying, in all cases the persons who raise that child from birth to the end of their life are the parents. They should not ever be left out. I'm a parent of five children, all of whom I'm quite proud of, but they're not perfect, any of them. I expect that in any intervention where they could improve their behaviour, I should be informed.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments? The member for Burlington, you have up to two minutes to respond.

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: I appreciated the opportunity, on behalf of these victims, to read their impact statements into the record. I have to say very clearly that these incidents happen in schools, and there are many times when teachers, principals, administrators and school boards handle the situation properly. But in the event that human nature kicks in and something happens and somebody decides not to handle this properly, we don't have the documented rules that need to be followed. We have no accountability in any of our acts; this bill provides nothing. We have no consequences in any of our acts; this bill provides nothing. It puts the family through a torturous process of having to be bounced from one person to another to be told that, "Well, you may think it's serious, but nobody else does."

I think we had the opportunity in this bill to prevent that from happening in many cases, and we missed that opportunity hugely. Why should parents have to try to weed through the system when we, as legislators, have the ability to direct policymakers, to direct the regulation writers to write the kind of regulations and policies that make it very clear how processes need to be followed with regard to student-on-student violence in our schools? Without those policies being clear, human nature will continue to kick in and parents will continue to be the advocates for their children who have been victimized. We are talking both about the perpetrator and the victim in this case. I think it's a shame that we have dropped the ball here again.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Ms. Leeanna Pendergast: It's a pleasure to join in the discussion today. I'm compelled to join in this debate today. I'm a high school vice-principal. I've been an educator for over 21 years. I have extensive front-line experience in this area. In fact, I am a member of the safe schools action team. So I do feel compelled to join in the discussion today. I see that one of my colleagues from the Waterloo Region District School Board whom I worked very closely with on the safe schools team is here today in the gallery. Welcome; thank you for being here. It's great to see you again.

Really, I think there are several things that need to be addressed here in this discussion. I'd really like to begin my comments as a principal who has just recently left the front lines, who has had extensive experience dealing with alleged student-on-student assault, sexual assault, abuse, homophobic behaviour. All of these things make our jobs as administrators in the schools very, very difficult positions to be in. I spent many years lobbying various other governments to step up to the plate and put in place some supports for administrators and for teachers in our schools, to have some clear policies and guidelines that help us when a student comes forward and reveals that he or she has allegedly been a victim of sexual assault, of harassment, of bullying. So it's a pleasure to be a member of this government that has actually put in place not just the Safe Schools Act but also Bill 157, which looks at safe schools in a way that address the needs of administrators on the front lines on a daily basis.

Again, I stress that it is so important that I join in the discussion because I am a front-line administrator. These are the things that I have lived for the past 11 years as an administrator and 10 years prior to that as a teacher. I don't think that we can compare. When we get a little detached from the front line, when we've been out of it for so long, I think it's difficult to be able to make comments and to read quotes from isolated incidents and really allow that to stand as a reflection of what's happening in our schools, because right now we have safe schools. We are working towards safer schools. We understand that we're dealing with—I always say that in a business model, our commodity is children and youth in our schools, so it's constantly in a state of flux and change. I am proud and pleased today to stand here as a front-line administrator, as a member of the safe schools action team, and to comment today on Bill 157, because I guarantee you that this is the right way to go.

1710

The opposition want details of the safety plan in the legislation. I say, with clarity, "Absolutely not." The details need to be in the PPMs. I tell you that as an administrator and as a principal. The details need to be in the procedures, in the policies and in the memos.

When a student comes in to report alleged assault, alleged sexual harassment or abuse, I tell you, I'm not going to sit down in my chair and pick up the Education Act and read it to find out what I should do, what policies

I should follow. I'm going to go to my board PPMs. I'm going to go to my board policies. I need to know what forms need to be filled out. I need to know exactly what phone calls need to be made and to whom. I need to know contact information for parents. I need to know who my contact is at dispatch, for the police. I need to know what documentation I need to keep as a principal. And I need to know exactly the interview procedures that I need to follow, as a principal, as an administrator, because it gets very complicated. Am I supposed to interview the primary witness? Am I supposed to interview the secondary witness? Do I interview the perpetrator? Do I put the perpetrator in a separate room and talk to the victim? This is a situation that can get very muddled very quickly, so it is so absolutely crucial that administrators have those guidelines, those protocols, in the PPMs from the board so that we can follow those and follow them consistently.

I think too that what we need to look at is that it's not always the principal. As fabulous as we are—

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Of course.

Ms. Leeanna Pendergast: Absolutely.

But it's not always the principal that the student comes to, to report. In a high school, as a vice-principal—sometimes students have the impression that we're the bad guys, and we're not, but when you're in crisis, the principal or the vice-principal may not always be the person to whom you go to disclose.

Over my many, many years of dealing with safe schools and safety issues in our schools, I came across the literature and the study of a Dr. Emily Werner. Dr. Werner did her study in the 1950s in California, and she studied students in school who were at risk for safety reasons. Interestingly enough, she followed these students for 30 years to see where they would end up in their lives. Miraculously, every one of the students in her study ended up as contributing members of society.

When she went to each of the members in the study and said, "You know what? You defied all odds, and you have been successful. How did you do it?" every one of the students in that study had the same answer. The answer was that somewhere in their lives they encountered one caring adult. Unfortunately, that one caring adult is not and cannot always be the principal or the vice-principal.

As the safe schools action team, when we travelled the province extensively what we heard was that that one caring adult oftentimes would be a guidance counsellor; it could be a favourite teacher; it could be an educational assistant. So that created a bit of a dilemma, in the sense of, how do we continue to shape this culture of respect in our schools and do it in a consistent manner?

What we're looking at today is the next step to have that happen, so that staff, with Bill 157, clearly will have direction in what to do. So when they become that one caring adult for a student in crisis, a student who is alleging sexual assault, abuse, bullying, sexual harassment, harassment or homophobic behaviour towards them, the staff member must report that information. They will have clear policies and guidelines in how to report that information and to whom.

I tell you, as a principal the one thing you don't want to hear when you're dealing with a student or a situation where you have student-on-student abuse, harassment or alleged assault is that the student went and told a staff member a week ago, two days ago, an hour ago or six months ago, because that's where we have the gaps. With Bill 157 we are closing those gaps and ensuring that any staff member who is in possession of information—and kudos to them; they are that one caring adult whom the student has chosen as a confidante—now has direction, and this allows them to perform their duties and their job more effectively.

I wanted to, on that note, read a quote:

"Barb Sonier, the Thames Valley District School Board's superintendent of safe schools, welcomed the proposed change. 'It does provide a clear direction to staff. They don't have to be discretionary about it,'—meaning the reporting—they can simply do it.' Sonier said most of the board's teachers and principals report incidents of bad behaviour, but the bill would provide some consistency throughout the system and across boards.

"The legislation would also apply to all incidents of gender-based violence, homophobia and inappropriate sexual behaviour among students. 'It's really important that we don't hide from these issues. We need to address them,' Sonier said."

That's exactly what this bill does. That's exactly why the safe schools action team has spent so much time listening to the people of Ontario, to find out what advice, what consultations they can give us, and we have brought this forward today in Bill 157.

I speak to you now, Mr. Speaker, as a parent, as an administrator and, of course, as a member of the safe schools action team. We know the legislation of April 1, 2003, the Youth Criminal Justice Act, was the first time in that federal legislation that the victim was addressed. Now in Ontario we are stepping forward to say that the victim is crucial to the whole picture here and that the parents of the victim must also be contacted. The impact on the alleged victim is just as great as it is on the alleged perpetrator. Now, I am proud to say, this will happen.

A lot of schools follow the restorative justice program, and the restorative justice programs works with this whole philosophy of including the victim. It's hugely important that we look at the victim, as well as the parents and the family of the victim. So with restorative justice, the perpetrator can sit with the victim and their families, in a healing circle and a lot of times the teacher or that one caring adult who received the disclosure, and they can all sit together and have a chance to have the floor in order to share how this has affected them and how it's changed their lives. The victims and the parents have a voice. In Bill 157, the parents of the victims must be contacted.

It's fair to say that we're focused on the perpetrators. We're calling the police, we're looking at the alleged assault and sometimes the victim gets overlooked. Again, this ensures that yet another gap will be closed, and now this will be good for the parents and the victim.

Stu Auty, who is a member of the safe schools action team and president of the Canadian Safe School Network, calls Bill 157 “another step in the right direction to improve school safety. Parents and principals need to know what is happening in our schools so appropriate action can be taken.”

As I said, this is yet another opportunity for this government to close those gaps in our schools and to ensure that they become even safer places to be.

1720

The LGBTQ community was another community that we heard from in travelling the province. My personal experience has been that it is difficult for a young person who is the victim of homophobic comments or homophobic assault to come forward because—again, we go back to the victim—sometimes in the disclosure there’s more harm done than good. So this is an opportunity for this government to say, “If this is occurring, then there must be a response.” So no longer can a youth disclose to a staff member who can say, “I’m sorry to hear that that happened to you.” In this case whoever the one caring adult is for that student who discloses alleged homophobic assault, abuse or behaviour must report to the principal. And so, yet again, another gap is being closed in making our schools safer places to be.

The police oftentimes are going to be part of this, if there is an alleged assault or a sexual assault. Again, a principal or an administrator needs to know very specifically in the policies, in the protocols, what to do and how to contact the police and how to act and react when the police have been contacted. We currently work in consultation with the police in our schools. We have police/school board protocols. What we are stressing is that the police investigation is a separate yet parallel investigation to the principal’s investigation, and that is being clearly defined so that the school can maintain its investigations at the same time as the police have their investigations.

In addition to Bill 157, we’re putting policy in place that needs to respond to, as I said, homophobic behaviour, but what we need are different levels of response because it is a complicated issue. A safety plan will be laid out to do exactly that. The safe schools action team has recommended that there be a provincial manual for student-on-student sexual assault, a manual that is consistent across the province and that directs principals, vice-principals, staff members—all staff members—on how to deal with this, and this will happen.

We are also recommending curriculum changes. We met with the health curriculum team. It is imperative that we start young. Young students in schools have to understand the importance of healthy relationships, of working together, and the consequences of inappropriate behaviour. This government is looking at healthy relationships and putting that right in the curriculum so that every student in the province of Ontario who goes through our publicly funded education system will understand the importance of healthy relationships, what is a proper reaction, what is an improper reaction, so that it’s not just

hit-and-miss—it might have been taught here but it wasn’t taught there. This will happen. This will be put in the curriculum and will be consistent across the province, which is closing yet another gap.

With the police and school board protocols, yes, we agree that they need to be looked at, and we heard that from the opposition. We agreed that we needed to look at them, and we did. That’s what the safe schools action team did. We looked at the police/school board protocols. The human rights commission did identify that the protocols were not always followed. We heard that, and so, for the 72 boards in the province, we looked at each and every one of their police/school board protocols and we determined that the local versions did reflect the provincial protocol. So how do we close that gap? We asked ourselves that question. The answer is that there needs to be more training to help all of the adults involved, and that will happen.

The other observation that I’ll share as an educator and a passionate safe schools advocate, is that for many, many years we asked previous governments to look at closer partnerships with community organizations and community groups. Unfortunately, that never happened. So with this government and this Ministry of Education, the safe schools action team has recommended closer relationships with community agencies, agencies that have skills and resources that we desperately need in our schools to keep them safer. I am pleased and proud to stand here today to say that thanks to this government—the McGuinty government—and Minister Wynne, that will happen.

I wanted to just leave with you a comment from Laura Hodgins, who is the president of the Ontario Principals’ Council and a constituent of the member from Perth—Wellington—

Interjection.

Ms. Leeanna Pendergast: The fabulous member from Perth—Wellington.

Laura, as president of the Ontario Principals’ Council, says that “it’s important to have preventive measures, but visible adult supervision is often the best deterrent of bullying and school violence.”

So not only do we have more adults in the schools in visible presence, we have today Bill 157, which will ensure that those adults in our schools have clear direction on what to do, how to do it, exactly what they must do and what’s expected of them. So I’m extremely proud to say that I am completely in favour of Bill 157; unprecedented, I’m proud to say.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: Well, I will have some comments to make even though my Liberal opponents had nothing to say about my comments—

Mr. Rosario Marchese: And amendment.

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: Or my amendments. What I do want to say is that the member from Kitchener—Conestoga describes an ideal situation where nothing went wrong—well, great. What we’re describing are

situations where kids and families have fallen through the cracks because the direction is not clear, because things are not concise and because some folks don't read the rules as well as this member did. I congratulate her for doing such a great job as principal, and I know that there are, for the most part, wonderful principals, wonderful teachers in our education system. What we're safeguarding here with Bill 157, or thought we were, was trying to catch those who slipped through the cracks. We are doing none of that in this bill. We have done nothing. We have not moved forward. In fact, we are codifying what is already happening. Why is that so important? We're codifying what is already happening. So we're moving not one inch forward with this bill.

We had a huge opportunity here to reduce the risk of kids falling through the cracks when they've been victimized in school by student-on-student violence. We have dropped the ball. There is nothing in this bill that will address that. I know that and you know that, and you can tell the world that this is the best thing since sliced bread, but believe me, there's a whole community out there that knows that that is not so.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. David Orazietti: I'm happy to provide some comment on the member from Kitchener–Conestoga's remarks. I want to congratulate her and commend her on her remarks this evening on Bill 157, and also for her professional work ethic and her involvement in the education system. I can share some of that as someone who taught high school in Sault Ste. Marie for 10 years and tell you that the steps that we're taking today are very, very important to improving safe schools.

The safe schools action team was reinvigorated by our government, and the report that came back in December 2008 recommended a number of changes. There are substantive changes in Bill 157, and hopefully we will be passing them into effect and into law with the support of members from the opposition. It would enshrine mandatory reporting by all school staff and principals for incidents that would involve suspension or expulsion, and it would include things like bullying, violence, vandalism, sexual assault, drug-related offences and the like. I think it's very, very important to ensure that it is mandatory for staff to respond to situations that could have a negative effect on school climate and on individuals in the schools.

I can certainly say from personal experience that much has changed in education, even over the 10 years that I was in the schools, and it's very important that we have these resources. I certainly recall the approach taken by the Conservatives when I was in education. It was less resources, less investment, fewer teachers, fewer supports, and I remember it quite clearly. It is in stark contrast to the investments that we have made in education and that we continue to make in education: 10,000 more teachers,

8,600 more support staff, despite the fact that we have 100,000 less students in our schools today in Ontario's education system.

This bill is a tremendously important bill, and I urge opposition members to support Bill 157.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments? The member for Kitchener–Conestoga, you have up to two minutes to respond.

Ms. Leeanna Pendergast: It's my pleasure to have yet another two minutes to respond. I wanted to respond to the member for Burlington, and to thank my colleague from Sault Ste. Marie for his comments.

To the member for Burlington, we are closing the gaps, and that's what I just spent the last 20 minutes outlining: how this bill does close the gaps. It moves us forward, and I'll recap, because it never hurts to recap. As a teacher, I know it's important just to go back to those five main points, so I'll recap that for the members. I do feel very strongly that we did not drop the ball. In fact, not only did we catch the ball, we hit it out of the park with this one. This is a home run. Let me just recap for the member why this is closing the gaps—I think I reiterated that quite often over the past 20 minutes, but I'll do it again—and how we are moving forward.

Again, all staff, whether it be a teacher or an EA, the adults in the building, will need to report if they have received this sensitive information. Principals will need to hear that information from staff as they report any sensitive information they have received regarding alleged sexual assault, harassment or abuse. Victims' parents will need to be informed. Again, I just reiterate to the member, we continue to close the gaps. Those are three things. Victims' parents would need to be informed, contacted, as well as the victim of the perpetrator. The LGBTQ community will now have a safer, more comfortable environment in which to report bullying. The police will work in consultation with us. Again, this home run creates and shapes a culture of respect in our schools.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I move adjournment of the debate.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Third reading debate adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Orders of the day.

Hon. Brad Duguid: I move adjournment of the House.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

This House is adjourned until Thursday, May 28, at 9 of the clock.

The House adjourned at 1734.

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First Session, 39th Parliament

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Thursday 28 May 2009

Jeudi 28 mai 2009

Speaker
Honourable Steve Peters

Président
L'honorable Steve Peters

Clerk
Deborah Deller

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Deborah Deller

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 28 May 2009

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 28 mai 2009

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Good morning. Please remain standing for the Lord's Prayer, followed by the non-denominational prayer.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

CORONERS AMENDMENT ACT, 2009

LOI DE 2009 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES CORONERS

Mr. Levac, on behalf of Mr. Bartolucci, moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 115, An Act to amend the Coroners Act / Projet de loi 115, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les coroners.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Debate?

Mr. Dave Levac: It's an honour and a privilege to speak on behalf of the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services, Minister Bartolucci. On October 23 last year, he introduced Bill 115, the Coroners Amendment Act. I'm very pleased to rise in the House today to support the legislation, which, if passed, will significantly strengthen Ontario's death investigation system.

Ontario's coroners and forensic pathologists make a vital contribution to the safety of all Ontarians. The motto of the Office of the Chief Coroner sums up the contribution quite eloquently: "We speak for the dead to protect the living." And so they do. They provide important answers for families, as well as communities, about the circumstances of a loved one's death, and they provide recommendations on how to prevent deaths in similar circumstances, not to pass judgment. However, public confidence in our death investigations system has been shaken to the core as a result of previous history. This government is committed to restoring that confidence, and this legislation is an important step—a step—in that process.

The proposed amendments to the Coroners Act are part of our ongoing efforts to ensure the quality of Ontario's death investigations. We want to make sure that the system has appropriate checks and balances to prevent the tragedies and miscarriages of justice that led the government to call for a public inquiry on this issue. The Honourable Justice Stephen Goudge published his report and recommendations from that inquiry on October 1,

2008. And 21 days later, our government introduced Bill 115 to address all of the legislative amendments—all of the legislative amendments—recommended by Justice Goudge, which we understand he was quite pleased to see.

Progress to date, however—this legislation is not just about responding to the recommendations of the public inquiry. The legislation represents the vital next steps in the process that started several years ago, to ensure that the highest quality of death investigations in Ontario take place. Since 2003, a great many changes have been made to the death investigation system in this province, and it's important to ensure the quality of death investigations, especially in criminally suspicious cases. The chief forensic pathologist has developed detailed guidelines for the conduct of autopsies in criminally suspicious cases. All criminally suspicious autopsies now undergo a peer review process to make sure that everything that should be done has been done, and has been done correctly. Now, when a pediatric autopsy is required, it is performed in one of four centres: Hamilton, London, Ottawa or Toronto. This ensures that the most experienced and knowledgeable pathologists conduct complex pediatric autopsies. There's a difference between the two.

In June 2008, we appointed Dr. Andrew McCallum as Ontario's chief coroner. Dr. McCallum, along with chief forensic pathologist Dr. Michael Pollanen, have embraced the challenge to lead Ontario's death investigation system through this period of intense change. I've had conversations with both, and both are extremely professional.

As well, work continues on the project to develop the new forensic services and coroner's complex. Just last week, the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services and Infrastructure Ontario released a request for proposals to design, build, finance and maintain the new facility. I recall, back in 1999 when I was first elected, speaking in this House about that need. The previous government started a process and didn't complete it, but I will say that everyone in this House agreed about the complex that was needed.

When completed, the complex will house the Centre of Forensic Sciences, the Office of the Chief Coroner and the provincial forensic pathology unit under one roof. It will provide state-of-the-art technology and laboratory facilities to meet the province's forensic needs now and into the years to come.

By moving this project forward, we're addressing Commissioner Goudge's recommendation that a new, modern facility is needed to house the Office of the Chief

Coroner and related forensic sciences in up-to-date facilities.

Bill 115 is the next step, and it has very clear objectives. If passed, this legislation would lay the foundations for a death investigation system that (1) has greater oversight, (2) improves public accessibility, and (3) is more transparent and with stronger accountability. Those three points are very laudable and important to providing us with the best system that we can possibly have.

Each of the proposed amendments for the Coroners Act meets with the intent of the legislative framework recommended by Commissioner Goudge's report and builds on the progress our government has already been making to strengthen Ontario's death investigation system.

I'd like to spend a few moments reviewing some of the key elements that we are proposing. Defining the death investigation itself: For the system to be transparent, it's important that people understand why a death investigation is held and what it's designed to achieve. The legislation before us would set out in statute the purpose of the death investigation.

In clear and simple terms, each investigation is conducted in the public interest to find five basic answers to the questions about a death: Who died, how did they die, when did they die, where did they die and by what means did they die? The answers to these questions determine whether recommendations are needed to prevent similar deaths or whether the death requires the additional public scrutiny of an inquest. Once the investigation is done, a decision is then made as to whether or not an inquest is necessary.

Establishing effective oversight, the next objective: It's clear from Commissioner Goudge's report that establishing effective oversight of the death investigation system is key to winning back the public's confidence in this system. That's why the proposed legislation would create a death investigation oversight council. The new council would oversee the work of the chief coroner and the chief forensic pathologist and hold them accountable for the quality of death investigations in Ontario. I believe this was supported by all parties.

Members of the council would be appointed by the Ontario Lieutenant Governor, based on the expertise and the experience needed to effectively advise and oversee the chief coroner and the chief forensic pathologist. To ensure transparency, the council would be required to submit an annual report to be tabled before this assembly, as recommended in the amendments during committee.

Strengthening the complaints process is another objective. When a death is investigated, we must never forget that it means a family has lost a loved one, and usually friends and neighbours. This is a time of great stress and anxiety for families. Some never get over it. And while our coroners are experienced professionals, there exists a risk for misunderstanding and miscommunication in such situations.

A strong death investigation system is a transparent death investigation system, a system that is not afraid to

listen and respond when a family expresses concerns over how the investigation into their loved one's death was handled. Under the proposed legislation, a new complaints committee would be established that would report to the oversight council—another added transparency system. The committee would track complaints made about the conduct of a coroner or pathologist and would deal directly with complaints about the chief coroner or chief forensic pathologist—one more system.

0910

Recognizing forensic pathology services is the other issue. In his report, Commissioner Goudge identified the vital role that forensic pathology plays in Ontario's death investigation system. Several of his recommendations were directed at improving the oversight of forensic pathologists, defining their roles and ensuring quality within the system. The proposed legislation addresses those recommendations and would, for the first time in Ontario, establish in law the roles and responsibilities of a forensic pathologist in the death investigation system, as well as establishing the framework needed to hold pathologists fully accountable for their work.

Roles and responsibilities needed to be defined. The proposed legislation would establish the chief forensic pathologist as the head of forensic pathology in the province. This would allow him or her to ensure the quality and consistency of services being provided by pathologists in the death investigation system across the entire province. There will be no patchwork here.

Ontario Forensic Pathology Service is another one of the goals. To further ensure consistency, accountability and oversight, a new service, the Ontario Forensic Pathology Service, would be created. Reporting to the chief forensic pathologist, the new service would bring together all of the province's forensic pathology services. These services are currently decentralized and run by regional forensic pathology units and other hospital facilities where autopsies are performed.

The register of pathologists was another recommendation. The chief forensic pathologist would also be responsible for maintaining a register of pathologists authorized to perform coroner's autopsies in support of a coroner's death investigation in Ontario. To be included on the register, a pathologist would have to demonstrate appropriate qualifications and credentials and continue to meet the strict performance requirements set out by the chief forensic pathologist.

Interjection.

Mr. Dave Levac: I'm sure that we'll just keep it moving right along for the member from Niagara.

Another important area of a death investigation that requires clarification is that of retained organs and tissue samples. Retaining organs and tissue samples, including whole organs, is a critical part of the death investigation process. Testing done on retained tissues can help determine the cause of death and can contribute to public safety after investigation. The proposed legislation would formalize the current policy of the Office of the Chief Coroner dealing with organ and tissue retention and ap-

appropriate family notification through regulation. That's something that wasn't happening.

An independent death investigation system: There have been several recent cases where families who have lost loved ones have called upon the minister to direct the chief coroner to call an inquest. The Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services currently has that authority under section 22 of the Coroners Act. While these cases are undoubtedly compelling and gut-wrenching, the decision to hold an inquest must be based on factors set out in the Coroners Act.

In a death investigation system based on the principles of professionalism and accountability, there is no place for political considerations, however well intentioned and requested. There are two schools of thought on this. One is that it be retained for that purpose, and the other is to move in the direction that this government has chosen. It is the chief coroner who has the experience and expertise to decide when a death investigation warrants an inquest, and the chief coroner should be free to make that decision without any political intervention. That's why the proposed legislation would repeal section 22 and so remove the power of the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services to order inquests.

This was controversial. The decision was made. We fell on the side of the other option that others were presenting. That's not to say that a decision regarding an inquest cannot be questioned or reviewed. Decisions on inquests routinely undergo three levels of review within the Office of the Chief Coroner. This includes the local investigating coroner, the regional supervising coroner and the inquest committee. The chief coroner can review the case if the family of the deceased is unhappy that an inquest has not been called after these three separate and independent processes are used. The chief coroner's decision regarding an inquest could still be the subject of a judicial review if there was a desire to seek a review of the particular ruling that the coroner made.

It does not mean that we will not still do inquests. Every child in any kind of public custody will receive an inquest automatically. Anyone in police custody will receive an inquest automatically. Any death in a correctional facility will automatically receive an investigation, and the coroner will decide if an inquest is necessary after that.

Northern First Nations and other remote communities were brought up in the inquest. When we talk about a strong death investigation system, we mean a system that delivers a consistently high-quality service to everyone in Ontario regardless of where they live in this province. In his report, Commissioner Goudge recognized that delivering a consistently high-quality service is challenging in areas of the province. The current shortage of doctors in northern, First Nations and remote communities can result in long response times in the event of a death, and sometimes coroners are unable to attend a death scene at all.

As recommended by Commissioner Goudge, the new legislation would provide for the appointment of individ-

uals other than medical doctors to perform a coroner's duties. This provision would provide coroners with the flexibility to meet local needs and provide improved services to northern and remote communities, as well as any other community that might benefit from a more flexible death investigation model. For example, paramedics or nurse practitioners might be appointed to fulfill that role. It is important to note, however, that all death investigations would continue to be supervised by the regional supervising coroner to ensure quality and consistency: the very purpose for this bill being introduced.

Focusing resources on public safety: Making the best use of available resources is of paramount importance to the delivery of public services, and death investigations are no exception. Coroners' inquests can make significant contributions to public safety; however, they are time-consuming and costly. It's important that they are held only in cases where there is a reasonable expectation of meaningful recommendations to prevent similar deaths, which indeed is the purpose of doing an investigation.

The proposed legislation makes several changes to the circumstances that require an inquest to be held. An inquest would no longer be mandatory in the case of an adult who dies of natural causes while in the custody of a correctional facility. Such cases rarely result in meaningful recommendations. However, inquests would now be required for individuals detained in psychiatric facilities or in secure treatment programs who die while being restrained—something that was offered as an amendment by the opposition, which we accepted. And there would be no change in the requirement for inquests into deaths in police custody; there will be inquests under police custody. These changes would allow coroners to better focus their resources on those complex cases where an inquest could result in meaningful recommendations to make Ontarians safer, and that's the job of the chief coroner.

Just to clarify: Coroners would continue to have the discretion to call an inquest in any case where they believe it is warranted; all deaths of adult inmates in correctional facilities would continue to be thoroughly investigated by a coroner, who would still be required to call an inquest in cases where he or she believes a person may not have died of natural causes—no changes there; as well, all deaths in police custody or of minors held in secure-custody facilities would remain the subject of a mandatory inquest.

In summary, the proposed legislation builds on the significant progress our government has already made to strengthen Ontario's death investigation system. If passed, the legislation would lay the foundation for further improvements. Therefore, I ask for the support of all parties in this House for the legislation so that we can create a more effective, more transparent and, above all, more accountable death investigation system that Ontarians demand and deserve.

I appreciate the work of the minister, I appreciate the opportunity to follow this through the system and I appreciate the opposition's recommendations and the discussions we've had in committee. Thank you very much.

0920

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Questions and comments?

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I will be speaking myself in just a few moments, so I just want to point out—I've got a few comments to put on the record, but our party will be supporting Bill 115. We do have some concerns with it—but I will be speaking in a few minutes myself.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member for Welland.

Mr. Peter Kormos: I listened carefully to the passionate and exuberant comments of the parliamentary assistant. I do want to make note of the fact that he, of course, did all the heavy lifting. The Solicitor General was nowhere to be seen while this bill was winding its way through the legislative process but will undoubtedly take credit for its successes and leave its failures to be borne by his parliamentary assistant.

I too will be speaking to the bill this morning. I had hoped and anticipated that the bill would have passed, but the lengthy discourse by the parliamentary assistant may have made that an impossibility in terms of this morning, because, of course, we can only sit until 10:15. His House leader may well want to speak with him about his frustrating the passage of the bill in a rather speedy manner this morning.

I have some things to say about the bill. It's not the be-all and end-all. The parliamentary assistant appeals to the opposition and says—he knows we're supporting the bill. For Pete's sake, stop that; stop that. We've been on the record from the get-go. He wants to create the impression that somehow his oratory and his exhortation have prompted us to come over onside. He knows we're supporting the bill. The bill's going to pass. What's remarkable is that it's taken this long and that this government has been so lax in responding to the critical matter that the bill, in fact, in itself responds to.

I do have some very special concerns about the repeal of section 22, and that's something that the parliamentary assistant didn't address. Maybe he's going to in the time allotted to him in his response.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Questions and comments?

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: It's always interesting to listen to the member for Brantford—and of course he did a job of the heavy lifting, as the prior member said, to bring this bill to where we find it today. Speaking passionately about it: As you bring something through like that, you have an extra attachment to it, so it's kind of interesting, listening to the member speak.

Where this bill is going to end up today, I'm not sure.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Oh, you're not?

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Well, we may help the government out on this one.

Interjection: Yes?

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Yes, we may help the government; we may not. It depends; it depends on where we come out on this. But we do have some time available for people to express their interests on this bill.

The Coroners Act, of course, is a very, very important part of Ontario's legal system and in our system of confidence in the government and the system, especially when we have state-sponsored health care. The Coroners Act is very important to ensure that the health industry in our province is working in the way in which it should, and the coroner's department is one that is very, very important to that end—to make sure that people remain confident in the system we have and that diagnosis, treatments, the way people are treated in hospitals, the way people are treated in retirement homes and nursing homes and old-age homes are appropriate and are done with the kind of care and attention that all Ontarians hope to have. The coroner is the one who ultimately justifies those actions.

I look forward to the rest of the debate on this bill.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Questions and comments?

The member has two minutes to reply.

Mr. Dave Levac: I'm glad I got everyone's attention. It's really important for me to make sure that everyone understands the depth and importance of this bill, so I really do appreciate the comments made by my colleagues opposite—the member from Simcoe North, the member from Welland and the member from Halton.

To respond directly to the member from Welland, I'm glad we were able to spend some time together during this bill and receive all of the information that was required, but he would be very interested to know that I was briefing and discussing with not only the staff, but the minister, on an ongoing basis, who did show an interest in this bill and did show me that he was concerned as much as anyone else was about ensuring that this was done in a way that represented his beliefs. He takes his job seriously. I'm sure the member would accept that as fact because that's what I'm telling him. That's exactly what it is.

Having said that, I do look forward to the comments from both of the opposition parties. As I said earlier, there were two schools of thought on this particular issue, and we wanted to see which side people were falling on on section 22. I happen to believe that the decision the government is making in the circumstances with regard to section 22 provides for the chief coroner and his complete team to come to the most professional, the most practical and the most accountable decision when it comes to doing an inquest.

Having said that, I definitely appreciate all of the feedback that I've received throughout the coverage of this bill. There were some very good deputations, and I'm sure that both members will make some references to those. Some of those deputations brought to light some issues that we did end up dealing with in the bill, and I believe all of those people deserve credit. The biggest group of people that deserve credit are those who had to suffer during the process of the unfortunate circumstances that we found ourselves in around Dr. Smith. Having said that, to those families and to any family that has lost a loved one and that requires the Coroners Act to

kick in, we offer our condolences, obviously. Hopefully, when we continue to rise in this House, we continue to offer legislation that continues to make us the greatest place to live, work, play and raise a family.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Further debate?

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I'm very pleased to rise today to comment on the third reading of Bill 115, the Coroners Amendment Act. First of all, I want to thank all the people who came to the committee hearings. Any time we can have open committee hearings and people are allowed to come and voice their concerns on a particular piece of legislation, it's what this place is really all about.

One of the things that I wanted to put on the record is that when we listen to the depositions that are made at the committee hearings, quite often, from my perspective as critic for community safety and correctional services, I like to take the opportunity to listen to their proposed amendments, and if I agree with those proposed amendments, I like to put them in the form of an amendment that the government can at least consider. We've seen that with a number of the deputants.

I talk to, in particular, people like Terence Young, who was here. He made a deposition and in fact, he has written a book called *Death by Prescription*. It should have been launched between the time we had committee hearings and now. He is a former member of this House and now an MP up in Ottawa. He talked about what he dealt with in his life and his family's life when he lost a daughter—I believe it was right at the kitchen table.

We had also in attendance Tim and Barb Farlow. Tim made a presentation to the committee, and I applaud him for his deposition. I know that when we originally had done second reading debate, Tim and Barb were in the House. They had lost a little girl at Sick Kids. She'd passed away at 80 days of age, and they're wanting answers in the death of that child as to exactly what happened. I put that all on the record in second reading debate. Tim Farlow was good enough to come to the committee and voice his concern again about the types of amendments and what some families have gone through.

One of the things I noticed that I thought was very, very important about the committee hearings was the fact that it was a very, very emotional time. A number of people had a difficult time coming to those hearings, voicing their concerns, putting on the record what their families had gone through. I think, as parliamentarians, this kind of legislation is often difficult to accept, and the committee hearings are difficult to put up with, because you relate to your own family all the time when you're listening to some of the tragedies that some of the folks have gone through.

0930

At the very beginning of this process, we felt that we would be supporting this legislation. Our party will continue to support the legislation. I wanted to put on the record, though, that we cannot agree on section 22. We think it is a mistake to repeal the section. I think everybody who came to the committee hearings felt the same way. No one said this was the right thing to do. They

thought it was an opportunity for the minister to dodge some responsibility. So, although we will be supporting the bill, we think that the section should not have been repealed and that the minister should still have that responsibility.

The comment coming from the government was, "We've only used it one time." But, you know, there might be an opportunity where that could happen next month or six months from now, when you might have that circumstance, when you might want the minister to intervene. For that reason, we felt that that section should have been left alone.

However, our party made 18 amendments to the bill. I thank the government for allowing at least three of them to be accepted, with a couple of minor modifications. We put a lot of effort into it; we take this legislation very, very seriously. I know that in my own office, my executive assistant, Gaggan Gill, put a lot of effort into research. She worked with Sarah Ellis, from our research department. These two young ladies did a remarkable job of listening to the concerns of those who made depositions to the committee.

We took those concerns and put them in the form of amendments. We felt they were very well-thought-out and well-researched amendments that made a lot of sense, and for every one of the amendments, we put on the record the reason for the amendment. Although as an opposition we don't expect the government to accept every one of our amendments, I think the government and the ministry staff would at least look at the amendments as though they were professionally done.

I know that when the parliamentary assistant addressed the amendments, he always came back with a lot of reasons why the amendment would not be acceptable to the government and the ministry. We accept that that's their job and their responsibility. But in the end, they're not wishy-washy amendments; these are amendments that made a lot of sense, and a lot of thought was put behind the drafting of the amendments. So I thank Gaggan Gill and Sarah Ellis for the hard work they've done on the bill. I'm very proud of the work that they did.

With that, I'm not going to speak all morning on this or spend a whole hour on it. I want to leave the rest of the time to the third party. I know they'll want to use the rest of the time. However, our party congratulates Justice Goudge for his work on this, for his recommendations, and we look forward to implementation of the bill. Any regulations that will have to be drafted, we look forward to seeing implemented as quickly as possible. As I say, our party will be supporting Bill 115.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Questions and comments?

Mr. Peter Kormos: Yes, I will be speaking to the bill in short order. Unfortunately, the lead is an hour and we're going to adjourn at 10:15. That creates some problems—I suppose not for me, but for the government. But there's lots of time. They've filed motions for midnight sittings, and I suppose we could sit until midnight tonight, or even Monday night. I know the government members look forward to that.

I know that from time to time those midnight sittings tend to get rather raucous, because people, after they eat their dinners, are upset by what they ate or they're fuelled by what they ate, and things get pretty wild and woolly in here on midnight sittings. We don't have the pages here, because it's not one of those—it doesn't get the G rating. It's a more adult-focused type of sitting, which doesn't diminish the public's interest in it, because of course it's televised.

So as I say, in short order, in a few minutes' time after we hear Mr. Dunlop's response to these questions and comments, we'll embark on the NDP participation in third reading of this bill, which undoubtedly is going to pass. Make no mistake about it: The bill will become law as soon as the government proclaims it once it receives third reading. Third reading may not be today; it could well be on Monday or Tuesday or Wednesday of next week. In fact, because the House is adjourning on June 4, the bill can always be held over. There's going to be a motion to preserve legislation in the event of a prorogation. A prorogation, of course, is when the Premier joins Michael Bryant on a lifeboat and looks to sort of renew the branding of the Liberals in Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Questions and comments?

Mr. Khalil Ramal: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for giving me a chance to comment on the speech from the member from Simcoe North. I think it's a very important piece of legislation, as he mentioned. I'm glad to see the opposition supporting this bill. I'm also glad to see the government put some kind of qualifications in place in terms of hiring pathologists and coroners who are qualified to practise in the province of Ontario. I know he has a comment on making sure that everyone practising in the province has certain qualifications in order to make sure the job is done in a professional manner. It's also important to remove the power from the minister, being like—

Mr. Peter Kormos: Because you can't trust him.

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I guess the member from Welland doesn't want to hear or listen. I guess he's having fun. That's very good.

I want to congratulate the member from Simcoe North.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Now he gives up; he surrenders.

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I'm not surrendering.

I think it's important to remove section 22. To give them power from the minister is not, I think, the professional manner. When you give it to these chief coroners, who have special qualifications to do their job, it's important, because we know that exactly no political influence will be put on the onus of the minister or any one government in place. It's very important to have a qualified person who decides when we call for inquests or who inquires on any important issues, and also to allow that the council be appointed by this bill, if this bill passes, to oversee the context of the investigation. It is very important to make sure everyone in the province of Ontario has a right to express his or her feelings.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Questions and comments?

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Again, speaking to the bill, our member from—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Simcoe North.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: I knew it was Simcoe North.

Mr. Jeff Leal: It's time for a GPS. You need a GPS.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: You need a GPS to get to Simcoe North.

It's interesting listening to the member from Simcoe North. Of course, in supporting the bill, he also pointed out that there was one section of the bill that does give us some difficulty: section 22, which was removed from the bill. That section allowed the minister to order an inquest to be made. Why that would be removed, I really don't know. From time to time in Ontario an inquest may not be judged to be necessary in some cases, but the public opinion may demand it. In those cases, the minister would have the authority to order an inquest into that passing.

That would be a very valuable thing to have in the toolbox. It's not something that would be used an awful lot but it's something that the minister would have available to him. Whether this is an attempt to remove the government of Ontario from governing entirely, I don't know. I don't know what the minister's thought process would be. I know that this government seems to be very interested in photo ops and making announcements and a little less interested in following through on some of those photo ops and announcements. Certainly the removal of section 22 would keep in line with the line of thinking this government seems to have. The bill itself is a good one, although I would like to have seen section 22 remain.

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The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Questions and comments?

Mr. Dave Levac: I'll be very brief.

Just to bring some clarity and maybe some straightforward discussion on section 22, there was a concern raised earlier, and somebody at the committee level had said that the coroner wasn't even in favour of this—and I wanted to bring some clarity to that comment. First of all, it was never made in his report. Number two, once he saw the government's response in legislation, in an interview with the minister and his staff—I wasn't there, but the minister was there—he said specifically that now that the government has responded so fully to the legislation in the recommendations, it didn't matter whether section 22 was there or not. I wanted to make sure that was clear. The chief coroner said that he did not need section 22 once he got the legislative changes he was looking for. Since he got them all, he basically said, then the professionalism and the expertise that is going to be put inside of this legislation and provided for the chief coroner would be sufficient to deal with the concerns raised before.

Having said that, I think it's important for us to stay focused on that. And I don't mind hearing the comments. I really do look forward to the comments from the mem-

ber from Welland on the specifics behind section 22. Other than the bluster, other than the emotional outrage, I'd like to hear the logic of why we would not listen to the coroner in his recommendation. I am allowing him to provide some time, and I'm giving him an opportunity to engage in this. I look forward to that.

As far as the member from Simcoe North—I knew that one right away—I appreciate his comments on the amendments. We did take some, as he noted, and I thought it was a good process.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Simcoe North has up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I'd like to thank the members from Welland, London-Fanshawe, Brant and my colleague from Halton.

By the way, it's Simcoe North, and it's the freshwater sailing and boating capital of the world.

Mr. Dave Levac: Lake Simcoe?

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Lake Simcoe, Georgian Bay, Lake Couchiching, the Severn River—500 kilometres of shoreline in my riding. It's a great area, a wonderful area to represent.

As I mentioned earlier, we'll be supporting this bill.

I want to repeat the fact that we support the bulk of the recommendations made by Justice Goudge. We think it was a thorough investigation, a thorough response. It was a tragedy that a lot of families need not have gone through if some of this legislation would have been in place before.

Really, in the end, as I say, we were pleased to take part in the committee hearings. It was one of the most emotional types of committee hearings I've been at in my 10 years at Queen's Park. I was intrigued by the stories that came forward from our presenters and those who told the stories of the loss of their loved ones. The child advocate was another person who came forward and did a very, very professional job in making their comments.

With that, I'm hoping this bill will be passed, and we hope that the bulk of it will be put to good use and it will make Ontario a better place to raise our families.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Further debate?

Mr. Peter Kormos: I'm doing my best to get this into the next 30 minutes. I'm not sure it can happen, but I will do my humble best so that this matter can get to a vote. If the parliamentary assistant, as I indicated earlier, hadn't consumed so much of the morning's time, he may have been more successful at facilitating passage of third reading.

I should compliment the parliamentary assistant, though. I have high regard for him. I consider him a friend. I have great respect for him. I was with him witnessing his carriage of this bill through second reading and through the committee process. Indeed, as Mr. Dunlop has said, it was a very interesting experience. All of us learned, I believe, a great deal. So I do compliment the parliamentary assistant for his carriage of this bill. Of course, he's paid well for doing that, just as he's paid well for praising the bill. He has his script, and were he not to follow that script he would be a parliamentary

assistant for but 30 minutes more today and would find himself over here in the rump with his rumpmates, who aren't even considered important enough to sit with their government backbench colleagues.

So I understand why the parliamentary assistant finds himself obliged to read the scripts. I'm not sure whether I would do the same thing, but far be it from me to judge. I don't want to impute motive to the parliamentary assistant. But he is a very capable member of the Legislature, and I tell the Solicitor General and the Premier—

Interjections.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Please, Speaker, don't give him Hansard recognition. It's the only way he has to get on the record. Were he to participate more actively he might find himself over on the other side.

Enough of my praise for the parliamentary assistant; enough of my praise for Mr. Levac. I should also acknowledge—because people here have been acknowledging the role of various people in the course of the bill's process—Margaret Drent, whom you'll agree on, because she's the research officer. Margaret Drent was just stellar in her assistance to all of us in terms of her research materials. We're all very grateful to her. She works non-partisan; her role is non-partisan, of course.

Look, the elephant in the room is this fellow Charles Smith. The Goudge inquiry was all about this incompetent liar's contribution to the unjust conviction of countless people, many of them parents. I accept the Goudge recommendations. I'm confident because I've heard no criticism of them from the legal community. Members of the defence bar especially, similarly, support the implementation of the Goudge recommendations. But I have serious, serious concerns, notwithstanding what Goudge says. Charles Smith, a liar? Goudge said so. Incompetent? Goudge said so. A bit of a whack and a flake? Goudge said so. Not his words; he used far more judicial language, but I'll put it in language that perhaps we're all a little more familiar with.

This guy Smith, for 24 years, while working for the Hospital for Sick Kids just down the road, lied and bungled his way through countless prosecutions of people charged with injuring and, more tragically, killing children, babies—countless unjust convictions. We're not talking about people who are sentenced to a couple of weekends in the local lockup; we're not talking about people who are sentenced to house arrest; we're talking about people who, almost inevitably when you murder a child, are sentenced to penitentiary time, where they do what is called colloquially "hard time." Let me tell you, when you're a baby killer, you're pretty darned close to the bottom of the ladder. Even in protective custody, you're a victim. Some of those people have been successful in having their convictions overturned. None of them will ever be successful at having their losses restored.

What bothers me significantly is how Smith could flourish—he did for 24 years. Was his stellar batting record not of some concern to crown attorneys? Was his stellar capacity to indict and convict people accused of killing children not of concern to the police officers

themselves, for fear that they had picked the wrong person to be charged? Was Smith's capacity to find criminal culpability with the named accused not of concern to judges?

0950

Smith didn't work in a vacuum. What about the coroner? Wasn't the coroner's office concerned? During the course of, if not the first or the second or third of those 24 years, at least well into the 15- and 20-year range, wasn't the coroner's office a little concerned about how effective Smith was at providing evidence that supported the crown's case and didn't support the defence argument? What about his colleagues? What about other pathologists? What about other people in the medical profession? What about the Hospital for Sick Kids, who kept him in their employ?

Smith wasn't a solo operator, and although Smith has been appropriately condemned—I only wish he could spend a portion of the jail time his victims have—we haven't recognized the culpability of other players in the system. Smith was supported, nurtured, tolerated, reinforced, aided and abetted by any number of police officers, crown attorneys and judges; I have no hesitation in saying that. And bring on the e-mails, folks, because I have absolute confidence in that observation.

He was giving public testimony. He was appearing in front of judges who have heard case after case after case and who, one presumes, were highly experienced. What I find incredibly frightening about this is that it reveals that tunnel vision of the criminal justice system wherein the presumption of innocence is given but lip service. My fear is that Smith could survive 24 years of lying and cheating and misleading because people in the criminal justice system don't really believe in the presumption of innocence. In fact, the presumption is that if you have been charged, you must be guilty, and if not of the crime you're charged with, at least guilty of something: a very dangerous precedent.

Look at the Attorney General's tinkering with jury panels—"tinkering" is putting it mildly—and the Attorney General's office only stops doing it once it gets caught. Don't think for a minute that the rationale for background checks of potential jurors is so that the crown attorney can find the people who are the most neutral and unbiased. Bullfeathers; the crown attorney is looking for the people who are most likely to convict and wants to exclude those people who might be a little more tolerant and a little more inclined to the defence. If you believe anything otherwise, then you're from some other planet than this one.

While Goudge has addressed procedural means whereby we can incorporate oversight, he didn't address the culture in those Bay Street towers—the Ministry of the Attorney General, amongst others, is over there on that side road; is it Grosvenor where the coroner's office is?—the culture wherein these professionals support each other, cover up for each other, cultivate incompetence.

Mr. Dunlop was there; Mr. Dunlop has referred to some of the heartbreaking stories of families who lost a

loved one: daughters, children, partners and parents. They told stories about coroners' offices that were oh, so high and mighty, that dismissed them with a little wave of the hand: "Go away, go away; you're bothering us." Is that a fair observation?

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Yep.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Mr. Dunlop responds. Of course, they weren't speaking about all coroners. We only heard about the bad ones. Nobody came forward—because people aren't inclined to do that—with good stories about coroners or other officials who treated them with fairness, respect and dignity. We heard about coroners' offices that refused to listen to family members who had lost a loved one, who refused to embark on investigations and subsequent inquiries and who had an aloofness, an attitude of, "We know it all, and you're stupid." That's a dangerous phenomenon that Goudge, of course, didn't address.

While it wasn't Goudge's job to indict Smith, he, in a very careful and judicially toned comment, did as much. Goudge wrote: "... Smith was adamant that his failings were never intentional. I simply cannot accept such a sweeping attempt to escape moral responsibility." In other words, the inference that you draw from that comment is that Goudge said these were intentional and that Smith knew full well what he was doing in his zeal to convict people, in Smith's zeal to pander to his bosses, in Smith's zeal to be seen as a caped crusader, in Smith's zeal to be seen as a friend of the victim, and in Smith's zeal to be seen as a friend of the police and the prosecution.

Unless and until we move beyond this and address the culture in which Charles Smiths can be cultivated and can be nurtured, we are going to have more Smiths—notwithstanding all of the oversights that have been proposed by Goudge.

We heard a lot of fascinating stuff. Members who were on the committee will remember Dr. Alexander Franklin, a wonderful, brilliant gentleman, speaking on behalf of the Worshipful Society of Apothecaries of London. Who might they be, you may ask?

Mrs. Liz Sandals: Is that really their title?

Mr. Peter Kormos: That is the body in Britain, a long-standing one that goes back centuries, that provides training for pathologists. Dr. Franklin came before us speaking about the Worshipful Society of Apothecaries of London to urge the committee to incorporate into the legislation a requirement that pathologists receive specific training as pathologists, because in Canada there is no formal training for certification process for pathologists. That in itself is pretty remarkable—ain't it?—that pathologists, especially those engaged in forensic pathology, where criminal prosecutions are contemplated or are under way, hold the fate of an accused in their legal pad, yet we don't have any specific training or certification for those people.

I want to thank Dr. Alexander Franklin for his submission. Of course, it wasn't incorporated into the legislation; the legislation couldn't accommodate that recom-

mendation. But I would urge this government to be the first in Canada to consider that recommendation of Dr. Franklin's and to consider the incorporation of standards of certification for pathologists here in the province of Ontario.

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I was delighted when the government backed off on its efforts to amend section 10 of the existing act. Section 10 lists any number of causes of death that could prompt a coroner's investigation: violence, misadventure, negligence, misconduct, malpractice or death by unfair means. I saw the amendment that says "repeal paragraph B of subsection 10(1) of the Coroners Act," and I said, "Why would we repeal that cause of death by unfair means? Would the brain trust please perhaps tell me what 'by unfair means' means?" Well, nobody knew. Well, hell's bells. Just like we have no business whatsoever passing legislation that nobody knows anything about—and Lord knows that happens often enough; you don't get a chance to sit in committees anymore. But you might well recall how especially government members are just little voting machines who vote as they're told and when they're told, with no idea whatsoever of what they're voting for; none whatsoever. They haven't got the slightest clue. They never read the legislation, never went to any briefings, and sit there doodling, writing love letters, picking fabric samples, nodding off so that the saliva, the spit bridge, forms between the side of their head and the desk. I've seen it, and so have you. And finally, they come to in time for a vote because the whip gives them the old elbow hook in the ribs. They vote, and then from time to time, they vote the wrong way. We've seen that happen too. Sometimes the opposition is accommodating and lets them recall the vote; other times, when the opposition wants to be a little more mischievous, we're disinclined.

But I was so pleased that the government backed off on its effort to repeal the "death by unfair means" provisions in the existing Coroners Act. I have no idea what it means still. I speculated. Nobody was about to refute my speculation, and I still intend to pursue the history of that provision of the act. But, heck, it might be useful at some point in the future, "death by unfair means." If there's such a thing as death by boredom, perhaps when one of the government backbenchers is speaking and an opposition member passes away by boredom, would that be unfair means? If the member, for instance, from London-Fanshawe took it upon himself to finally rise in the House and deliver a rational speech but remain tediously boring and I were to die from that boredom, would that be death by unfair means? I don't know, but I don't want the possibility of that being considered to be excluded from the legislation, and I applaud the government for abandoning that goal.

Section 22: When you talk about what is contentious about this bill, that probably is the target. Section 22, a long-standing provision of the Coroners Act, says, "Where the minister has reason to believe that a death has occurred in Ontario in circumstances that warrant the

holding of an inquest, the minister may direct any coroner to hold an inquest and the coroner shall" etc. etc. See, right now it's totally discretionary on the part of coroners as to whether or not to hold an inquest, and Mr. Levac, the parliamentary assistant, has been told to say that people have access to judicial review should they disagree with the coroner's decision not to hold an inquest, and he's right. The new legislation will provide for judicial review.

Well, let's talk about Jared down in Hamilton. Remember him? We should. He was the little boy who was killed by his father, and then his father was shot by police in a standoff. Two tragic deaths, two very different players—interconnected, no two ways about it, no doubt. But Andrea Horwath and the NDP have, from the very beginning, been pleading to have separate inquests.

Think about this: an innocent little boy, a kid, slaughtered by a parent, butchered by a parent, and his mother's search for justice has to be clouded by the fact that the father's inquest is being held contemporaneously with the inquest into the death of the kid. Is it legal? Of course. The Coroners Act provides for a coroner to use his discretion to join inquests. Is it moral? I don't think so. Is it ethical? I don't think so. Is it productive? I don't think so, nor do a whole lot of people. That an innocent child has the consideration of the circumstances surrounding his slaughter clouded by the consideration of the police shooting of his murderous father is not fair to that child's memory, isn't fair to his mom or his grandparents and isn't fair to the community.

Judicial review would be unsuccessful in that event because, as you know, Speaker—and there are lawyers here in this chamber who will correct me if I'm wrong—a judicial review is capable of determining only whether or not the law was properly applied. A court would have to say: "Yes, the law was properly applied. It's within the discretion of the coroner to join two inquests." That's why we need the discretion of the minister.

What is this bizarre flight from power that's increasingly taking place in government, ministers who increasingly want to distance themselves from the real world, the creation of these arm's length bodies so that ministers can stand up here in the chamber as they do on a daily basis, and say, "Don't ask me. It's at arm's length"?

Mr. Paul Miller: "Ask the LHIN."

Mr. Peter Kormos: "Ask the LHIN," Mr. Miller says. So when the Niagara Health System anonymous unelected gang of trustees shut down small-town hospitals and I stand in this chamber and put the question to the minister, the minister says: "Don't ask me. I'm not responsible. LHINs make those decisions." It's this flight from responsibility, this flight from power, this flight from accountability.

The Minister of Community Safety, the Solicitor General, was pestered, hectored, by Ms. Horwath, who repeatedly called upon him, the Solicitor General, to use his—the Solicitor General's—discretion under section 22 to order a stand-alone inquiry into the death of Jared. Response after response consisted of the minister saying:

"The coroner has made a decision. It's not for me to get involved." Well, that's why you're paid the big bucks. Of course you're supposed to get involved.

The repeal of section 22 wasn't part of the Goudge considerations; it wasn't part of the Goudge recommendations. The repeal of section 22, I suspect, was as much a result of the hectoring by Ms. Horwath of the Solicitor General about Jared as it was about anything else.

The argument, "It hasn't been used often"—well, good. That means it hasn't been abused, doesn't it? That means that ministers haven't been, willy-nilly, using section 22 to order coroners' inquests. The minister doesn't go home and take a walk around the block saying, "Should I use section 22 or shouldn't I?" The minister makes no decisions, by God, of that nature. The minister, appropriately, relies upon advice given to him by any number of civil servants, bureaucrats, lawyers, counsel, people who have far greater tenure than any politician ever does, people in the ministerial bureaucracy.

It is extremely troubling. Section 22 is a safeguard. Section 22 allows the public interest to be given effect from time to time, and for the life of me, I don't know what's wrong with that. Surely politicians, elected people, should be pursuing the public interest rather than what is necessarily prescribed or proscribed by the law at any given point in time.

1010

We are very concerned about the repeal of section 22. And make no mistake about it: It's never going to be re-enacted—is it?—ever, ever, ever. Increasingly, politicians, especially those who are in the executive branch, want to keep themselves pristine by not having to do anything, which means doing nothing, not having to worry about dirtying their hands or having to roll up their sleeves and make decisions that reflect the assumption and the recognition of some responsibility on their part.

The stonewalling by the minister around Jared was, in and of itself, frustrating. And then the Solicitor General's solution—oh please; it's not the Solicitor General, I give him too much credit; it's the Premier's office—the Premier's office's solution is to simply repeal the section so that Mr. Dunlop will never, ever, in the course of his parliamentary career—and I expect it to be lengthy; I've been up in his riding—be able to stand up on behalf of a constituent who's been denied an inquest by the coroner and appeal to the Solicitor General to "Please, use your discretion." Never will Mr. Levac, the member from out Brantford way, the riding of Brant—and I've been in his riding; I expect he'll have a similarly lengthy political career. I have no doubt that not all of it is going to be spent over on that side, and when he's a member of the opposition and has a little more freedom to act for his constituents and he's compelled to stand here and appeal to a Solicitor General to "Please, use your discretion under section 22 so that the public interest—so that justice can be obtained," why, it won't even be a question that's in order because there won't be a section 22. I would expect that he'll sit here in silence, biting his tongue, swallowing the blood and saying, "I can't even

ask that question because, oops, in 2009, the Liberal government repealed section 22"—section 22, which has never been abused, has been used very, very cautiously. Indeed, there was only one instance in recent history where it was used—and very effectively, I might add; very effectively. You recall the boating incident where there was a suspicion of death and where, in fact, the coroner's inquest determined that nobody had died—a not at all inappropriate role for the coroner's inquest to perform.

We'll be voting for the legislation. I suppose we might as well get it done and over with. I've already laid too much blame for delay at the feet of the parliamentary assistant. I don't want him to be hauled into the Premier's office or, even more worrisome, into Ms. Smith's office, the House leader, where the beating he'll take will be far more severe than anything that the Premier's office could administer. But I've got to tell you, I don't look forward to the occasion when government members are called upon by their constituents to appeal to the Solicitor General around a tragic death in their own communities, only to realize that they've repealed that very section that gives them the final appeal in terms of obtaining justice for, oh, maybe a dead kid or a dead wife or a dead grandma or a dead husband. I truly rue this day.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Questions and comments? Further debate?

Mr. Levac has moved third reading of Bill 115, An Act to amend the Coroners Act. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Third reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

It being 10:16, this House stands recessed until 10:30.

The House recessed from 1016 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mrs. Julia Munro: I'm pleased to welcome and ask all members to welcome the citizens of the town of Innisfil, who will be here shortly to witness question period and particularly, the issue around their boundary.

Mr. Bob Delaney: I'm pleased to welcome a guest, a good friend of mine, Jordan Goldblatt, in the members' east gallery. I ask that members join me in welcoming him on his first trip to the Legislature.

Mr. Charles Sousa: I'd like to welcome to the House long-time residents of south Mississauga—over 40 years—most recently now in Clarkson: Ms. Sonya Banquier and Mr. Jeremy Beaty. Welcome to Queen's Park and thank you for being here.

Mr. Reza Moridi: I wish to welcome Mr. Shahram Khorramshahi, parliamentary secretary of international affairs, the Parliament of the Federative Republic of Brazil, to the east gallery.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I'd like to introduce Bernard and Marlyene Brooks, who are from my riding and are down visiting. We're delighted to have them here

today. I'll be having lunch with them and giving them a bit of a tour, so we'd like to welcome them.

Hon. Christopher Bentley: Hanane Bouji is doing some work part-time in my office for the summer, and she's here watching question period for the first time.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): On behalf of the Minister of Education and page Mariah Palantzas, we'd like to welcome her mother, Eleni Palantzas, to Queen's Park today, sitting in the members' gallery. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. John Milloy: I'd like to introduce Royston Simon from my community, who's with us today and hasn't arrived yet, but will be here in a moment to watch question period.

Mr. Michael Prue: I would like to introduce my constituency assistant, who is here observing today: Mr. Andrew Lauer.

ORAL QUESTIONS

ELECTRONIC HEALTH INFORMATION

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: My question is to the Premier. Yesterday, the CBC reported that another of your government agencies has been playing fast and loose with taxpayers' dollars and spending money like it grows on trees. Premier, can you explain to overtaxed Ontarians just why Sarah Kramer, the CEO of eHealth, your appointee, receiving a salary of \$380,000 a year, was able to give herself a \$114,000 bonus after only three months on the job?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I'm pleased to take the first question. I know my colleague Minister Caplan will speak to some of the details in the supplementaries.

Let me say at the outset that the very reason that we want to move ahead with an electronic health record system in Ontario is to deliver better health care by finding greater efficiencies and being more respectful of the Ontario taxpayer dollar. I know that all my colleagues would agree with the importance of that, just as we would also all agree that as we set up this system we should be, throughout, respectful of the Ontario taxpayer dollar.

I know that there are some facts that have been brought to the fore which do not sit easy with us in government, as they do not with my colleagues opposite. I understand that the auditor is taking a look at this. We welcome that observation. If he wanted to come out with recommendations sooner rather than later, we would welcome those as well. I just want to assure my colleague that this is a concern to us as well.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: I think most people assume the government is responsible for safeguarding tax dollars. This is your appointee; this is your agency. To say you're concerned is cold comfort, I would think, to hard-pressed taxpayers.

Hundreds of thousands of Ontarians have lost their jobs. Communities are hurting; families are suffering; yet week after week we hear of this government and its agencies abusing the public trust, spending tax dollars like there's no tomorrow. There's a growing sense of entitlement in this government. It's infecting their agencies, clearly. You can't distance yourself from this. It's happening on your watch. You get up and explain to Ontarians: How could this happen?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Health.

Hon. David Caplan: I do thank the member for the question. I must admit I do not agree with his characterization.

I can tell you that electronic health is significant. It's an important investment in the modernization of our health care system. What it will do is connect medical professionals together. What it will do is provide greater information for the kinds of decisions that will go into better patient care. What it will do is eliminate errors and have better patient safety. I think that those are the results that Ontarians want to see from their health care system. I think that those are important investments. I think that Ontarians understand that south of the border, President Obama, as part of his stimulus package—a \$50-billion five-year investment in electronic health.

This government is determined to modernize our health care system to ensure that patients have better health care and have the electronic health infrastructure in place. As the—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Final supplementary.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: That was unadulterated pap. People are sick and tired of those kinds of responses. I asked you a specific question about a \$114,000 bonus, taxpayer dollars, after just three months on the job—no explanation or justification for why you were asleep at the switch.

Over a four-month period, Ms. Kramer spent nearly five million tax dollars on consulting fees. She awarded those contracts without going for public bid. She broke the rules but still gave herself a \$114,000 taxpayer-paid bonus. You can't wash your hands of this. You're responsible for the agencies and the people you appoint to them. Stand up and tell hard-pressed Ontarians why this happened and why you failed to do your job.

Hon. David Caplan: Once again, I disagree with the member opposite. No rules were broken.

In fact, eHealth has accomplished much since they began in September. They've unveiled Ontario's first-ever comprehensive, published eHealth strategy. They've launched ePrescribing, which is the first of its kind in this country, connecting pharmacists with family physicians in two communities, Collingwood and Sault Ste. Marie, cutting down medical errors when it comes to filling prescriptions. They're partnering with OntarioMD to roll out electronic medical records in primary care physician offices throughout the province. They've launched the baseline data set for a diabetes initiative to measure the current state of diabetes care in Ontario, providing phys-

icians with information needed to improve care. They've established a diagnostic imaging network across Ontario so that images are available digitally, resulting in faster turnaround times for patients.

These are tangible results, benefits for patients, and we're going to continue driving forward—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

ELECTRONIC HEALTH INFORMATION

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: Back to the Premier: Obviously we're not getting any answers to these legitimate concerns. Months ago, our caucus raised concerns about what we saw as a sense of entitlement at play within the management ranks of eHealth. The red flags were flapping in the wind, alarm bells were ringing, but you and your minister chose to ignore massive expenses and breaches of government rules. Now it has come back to bite you, and you can't walk away from this, Premier. The buck stops with you. Why did you and your colleagues not act months ago when the arrogant misuse of tax dollars first became known?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Health.

Hon. David Caplan: The fact is that this government did act months ago. Previously, an organization called the Smart Systems for Health Agency was put in place with an incorrect mandate. In fact, it was through the timely intervention of my predecessor that an operational review was ordered and acted upon, to the formation of eHealth Ontario. And eHealth Ontario has moved forward quite aggressively and, I would say, with some urgency to be able to deliver the electronic health infrastructure that Ontario patients would want, that Ontario health care practitioners tell us they need.

I have had a chance to speak with the board, with the chair, Dr. Alan Hudson, and with Ms. Kramer. I have impressed upon them the need to ensure that taxpayer dollars are spent wisely and with sensitivity, given the factors that the member mentioned in an earlier question. I know they are following—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

1040

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: That's a typical cavalier attitude when it comes to misuse of tax dollars with respect to this government. This minister was clearly asleep at the switch. Now he's defending his lack of action.

CBC's The National last night revealed that one of the consultants hired by Ms. Kramer was paid \$300 an hour for reading newspapers, watching TV, and even for conversations on the subway.

This is your agency, Minister. The Premier met with this lady before she was appointed. This is your appointee. You can't walk away from responsibility.

I would ask you today to stand up and explain to struggling families in Chatham, Windsor and Cornwall just why you allowed this to happen, why you failed to protect scarce tax dollars.

Hon. David Caplan: In fact, we treat tax dollars very seriously on this side of the House, and I know that all members would want that to happen.

eHealth is an expensive undertaking; I acknowledge that. We're drawing on expertise from around the world because I'm determined, and this government is determined, to build the best electronic health system for all Ontarians.

We're not alone. We're using specialized consultants, specialized talents for large-scale IT initiatives. It is standard practice in public and private sector around the world.

These are important investments in improved health care for Ontario residents. They are important to transformatively see better patient safety, as I mentioned earlier. We're going to continue to drive forward for improved health care for Ontario residents.

I do understand that in fact the percentage of consultants, for example, as the member mentioned, when started by the Conservatives, started at 27%—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Final supplementary.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: The folks over there would make David Dingwall proud, for feeling so entitled to your entitlements.

This Minister of Health is no stranger to scandal. He left his previous position under a cloud with the extravagances at OLG. Where Minister Caplan goes, scandal and sloppy oversight, when it comes to the expenditure of tax dollars, are sure to follow.

Not so long ago in this place we were asking about millions of tax dollars being thrown out the door by the former Minister of Citizenship. Well, he's now sitting in the backbenches.

I ask the Premier—this should really go to the Premier: Along with Ms. Kramer, we would hope both of you will soon be given your walking papers. When can we expect that to happen?

Hon. David Caplan: I'm going to keep delivering on the mandate we talked to Ontarians about, which is improving health care in the province of Ontario, lowering wait times, expanding access to family health care and, yes, making sure that we modernize our health care system with an important eHealth platform.

We do have a legislative officer who is and has been engaged, as I mentioned back on April 9 in this House, at the behest of the federal Auditor General. Provincial counterparts were asked to look at these very expensive undertakings and these investments of public dollars in health care systems. I look forward to the Auditor General giving us his advice about the efficacy of those investments and about ways that we can improve.

I know that Ms. Kramer, and Dr. Hudson too, have just recently met with Mr. McCarter, the auditor, and in fact have engaged him. We are determined to deliver value—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

ELECTRONIC HEALTH INFORMATION

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour le premier ministre. Premier, everyone in Ontario's health care community agrees that we need an electronic health record. But Ontario has continued to lag far behind other jurisdictions, and this after the government has poured close to \$1 billion down the drain. Yet the bungling and the mismanagement continue at the new eHealth Ontario agency, which doled out close to \$5 million in questionable contracts during the first four months of operation.

How much desperately needed health care money is this government prepared to blow before it steps up and cleans the latest eHealth mess?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Health.

Hon. David Caplan: I disagree with the member opposite. In fact, her leader had said in this House that we should pull the plug on electronic health initiatives, so I'm glad that she agrees that these are important investments in the modernization of health care.

As well, there are no questionable contracts. I disagree with her on that. These are important guidance and investments during the transition from an agency start-up toward its maturity and the development of a plan.

I shared earlier with the leader of the official opposition some of the accomplishments just in September, and I'll list them for the member opposite: We've unveiled the first-ever comprehensive, published eHealth strategy and we've launched ePrescribing. This is a project which will connect pharmacists to primary care physicians to ensure communication and the reduction of errors. We're partnering with OntarioMD to—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

M^{me} France Gélinas: What we're talking about here is a lax approach of the eHealth president and CEO, who is living large on the taxpayers' dime. Sarah Kramer spent—blew, really—\$50,000 on office makeovers and brought in \$114,000 in bonus money after five months on the job. This is, of course, on top of her \$380,000 base salary. She also found nothing wrong with handing out million-dollar contracts with no tendering process. Is it okay to let consultants bill us \$300 an hour for reading newspapers and riding the subway?

When will this minister say that enough is enough? This is a gross and appalling misuse of taxpayers' money.

Hon. David Caplan: I disagree with the member opposite. In fact, we are tracking the best talent not only in Canada but from around the world in delivering an eHealth infrastructure which is going to improve care for patients.

They're developing an electronic system to store images from hospital CT scanners on surgical and neurological care to improve patient access to care. They're managing and delivering a managed drug profile viewer in order to be used in all hospital emergency departments across Ontario to help health care providers quickly identify and prevent harmful drug reactions and provide

more informed emergency care. They've established a major network service provider for Telemedicine in Ontario, enabling over 42,000 clinical consultations in 2008 alone.

Those are impressive achievements in just a few short months, and I look forward to more as they move forward on a—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Final supplementary.

M^{me} France Gélinas: I think this minister has proven time and time again that he is incapable of managing the start-up of an electronic health records system and infrastructure for Ontario. This incompetence is mind-boggling, and it is the taxpayers who are picking up the tab all around. I sincerely think that heads need to roll, starting at the very top.

When will the minister look in the mirror, realize that he is not capable of bringing an electronic health record to the people of Ontario, realize that he is incompetent as a Minister of Health, do right thing and resign?

Hon. David Caplan: I'm going to keep driving forward on electronic health infrastructure in the province of Ontario.

I can tell you that we have already had expressions of interest in public tendering on a diabetes registry, and the request for qualifications will be going out quite shortly.

I think it's understandable that, in the transition from a start-up agency to full maturity, you would see taking on expenditures, as eHealth Ontario has, but I can tell you that Ontario is quickly making gains and quickly making strides to eliminate that gap which exists between where we are today and where we hope to be.

I have every confidence in Dr. Hudson and in Ms. Kramer and in their abilities to deliver on the most ambitious agenda that this province has undertaken when it comes to eHealth.

I can tell you that we know from the operational review that the Smart Systems for Health Agency was not set up with the proper—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

TAXATION

Mr. Michael Prue: My question is for the Premier. According to today's Toronto Star and the reports, you are considering a plan to bury the HST in the price tag of goods and services. Clearly, this government is doing everything it can to hide the 8% tax grab from unsuspecting Ontarians. They know this unfair tax grab will make life harder for them and their families. My question is, why is the Premier trying to fool Ontarians about the real impact of the tax grab by burying it in the final price?

1050

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The member points out that a number of sources have talked about a single price. We appreciate his insights and advice on this. I will remind

him what both the Premier and I said: that the HST, the single sales tax, will be transparent and plain, both on the shelf and on the receipt a customer has.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Michael Prue: The McGuinty Liberals think that they can act like magicians and make the tax suddenly disappear by hiding it in the final price, and it seems that this government will go to any lengths and say just about anything to downplay the real impact of the 8% tax grab.

Speaking to reporters yesterday, the finance minister mistakenly suggested that the tax grab was revenue-neutral for families, but his own tax calculator shows that it's not. Instead of trying to bamboozle Ontarians, why won't this minister and the Premier say no to burying the tax, right out front, right now?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I thought I was pretty clear about that in the first question. Let me say it again, as I said it yesterday, to my friend and colleague: The tax, the single sales tax, will be plain, transparent and in view, both on the shelf and on the receipt.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Mr. Michael Prue: I'm not sure what that means. I'm asking for him to be more candid than that. It's going to be plain to whom? Is it the same as the GST and the PST taxes on alcohol and on gasoline, which are hidden and nobody sees? Is that the "plain" that you're talking about?

In the newspaper today, one law firm gave the real reason this government is considering burying the tax. According to Blakes, it "will likely have less of a psychological impact on consumers if tax-inclusive pricing is adopted." That's apparently the basis for this government's policy decisions: psychological responses to tax proposals.

Maybe the McGuinty Liberals think hiding the sales tax will make it easier to hike it again. Maybe that's the real plan. Why won't the Premier do the right thing and axe the tax altogether?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I'll speak to the people of Ontario this time and say to them that number one, the single sales tax will be plain and transparent at the shelf and it will be plain and transparent on the receipt. There's no question about that. I don't have any other words to express it to help the member understand the answer.

I will not scrap the most important tax reform in the history of the province. It's too important to unemployed auto workers to get this economy going. It's too important to the forestry sector. It's too important to this province's future growth. And so we are embarking on a tax reform package that will keep our businesses competitive. Unlike the members opposite, we have a plan, which they voted against, that shows the compassion and care of this government and this party for the future of our people, for the future of the province. It's the right plan—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

ELECTRONIC HEALTH INFORMATION

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: My question is going to go to the Premier. We now know, according to the CBC, that over a four-month period, eHealth has spent about five million tax dollars on consultant fees. Premier, as you know, all of these contracts were awarded in secret by the agency's CEO without any public bidding and without any tendering. This goes against established provincial rules. Premier, why did you allow this to happen?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Health.

Hon. David Caplan: In fact, no rules were broken. In the case of start-up, as has happened under previous governments, it is allowed. Of course, I have stressed with Ms. Kramer and Dr. Hudson the need to have a procurement process that is competitive in nature, which in fact they have fulfilled starting with the diabetes registry.

I find it interesting that when the member and her colleagues started up the Smart Systems for Health Agency, consultants represented 27% of the cost and of the expenditures. Today it is down to 16%. We are taking more of that work in-house. We are ensuring that taxpayers receive value for the dollars that they are investing. They are substantial, but I know that these individuals—I have full confidence in their ability to drive out on better patient safety, better care, connecting—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: I'm not surprised that the Premier didn't answer the question. He wouldn't respond to our questions on Smart Systems for Health either, which was quietly disbanded after wasting \$800 million of taxpayer money.

The other thing the Premier knows, and I guess the minister knows, is that much of the money is being awarded to Liberal-friendly firms in the name of Courtyard, which has donated hundreds of dollars certainly to Liberal ridings. But we also know that Courtyard is being paid by the Ministry of Health.

Why, Premier, are you allowing the squandering of taxpayer money to pay for consultants' fees to both the Ministry of Health and eHealth?

Hon. David Caplan: The member is simply wrong. This is a company, a consulting firm, that is well known and is doing work worldwide, in Canada and elsewhere. They have particular expertise, and we'd be foolish not to take advantage of the expertise of these individuals when it comes to delivering on an e-health agenda. In fact, the member says that money for Smart Systems for Health was squandered. She and her colleagues set up this organization with an incorrect mandate. They took on consultants at the rate of 27% of their expenditures; we have changed that. We have eliminated that kind of situation and brought more of that work inside.

I can also tell you that Smart Systems, while it did not have the proper mandate, did have and has had a network of connected sites, 7,000 of which—50,000 users across

the province of Ontario on the secured network. This is an important—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

ELECTRICITY INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Michael Prue: My question is for the Premier. On July 20, 2008, there was a horrific explosion at 2 Secord Avenue in East York. Nearly 1,000 people were forced from their homes. On March 19 of this year, there was a second electrical explosion, this time at 3640 and 3650 Kingston Road in Scarborough. Five hundred people were forced from their units and none have been allowed to return to date. Many thousands of multi-unit buildings could be ticking transformer time bombs and there hasn't been a word from the Minister of Community Safety's office.

Can the Premier tell us when these residents can expect the fire marshal's report to be released by your government?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Energy and Infrastructure.

Hon. George Smitherman: As the minister isn't in the House today and since the matter at hand does have to deal, at the heart of it, with an important piece of the electricity sector infrastructure, I could tell the honourable member that we're also working very, very closely with the officials from Toronto Hydro and other local distribution companies and the Ontario Energy Board to allow for the necessary investments to ensure that the infrastructure, much of which is below the surface of roads and the like in vaults, is receiving the necessary capital investments. I'm not entirely familiar with the angle that the honourable member has spoken to, but I do want to let him know that we have been working to try and address whatever capital deficiencies may sometimes cause these very, very challenging circumstances for our residents. I'll take the rest of his question under advisement and seek to get back to him.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Michael Prue: I am happy the minister wants to take some of it under advisement, but really, the question is, we have hundreds and hundreds of families locked out of their homes for months at a time and the government doesn't seem to be doing anything or even releasing the report.

Millions of Ontarians live in high- and low-rise multi-unit buildings. They need to know their homes are safe. They need to have the confidence that if such accidents occur, there will be provisions to assist them. They also need to know why these transformer explosions occurred in the first place. The release of the fire marshal's report will start the process of ensuring safer high-rise communities and shed light on how the explosions happened and how to prevent these ticking time bombs.

The government must act now to speed up a report that will prevent more tragedies and get people back into their homes and into safety. Will the government release the report now?

Hon. George Smitherman: In the earlier answer, I already acknowledged to take the matter up with the respective minister and to report back to the honourable member in a timely way, and I will do that.

1100

GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS

Mr. Phil McNeely: My question is to the Minister of the Environment. We know now, more than ever, the urgency of action required to protect our environment. Climate change is our generation's greatest environmental challenge, and Ontarians expect their government to take action. Our government has set ambitious greenhouse gas reduction targets of 6% below 1990 levels by 2014 and 15% below by 2020, and we have laid out an integrated plan to achieve those reductions.

Yesterday in this House, the minister introduced a bill that would enable the province to establish a cap-and-trade system for Ontario, another key step in ensuring Ontario achieves our greenhouse gas reductions. Could the minister provide this House with further details of how a cap-and-trade system would enable Ontario to meet our ambitious environmental goals?

Hon. John Gerretsen: This is indeed a great question. As you know, a good piece of legislation was introduced yesterday, because cap-and-trade is one of the most important ways in which we can combat climate change. It will reduce our greenhouse gas emissions, and that's what we should all be interested in. But not only will it do that; it will also attract investments in new technology and create new jobs.

The proposed legislation that was introduced yesterday is enabling legislation, and it's a good first step. It will deliver on our promise to reduce greenhouse gases from industrial sources, it will give us the ability to link with other trading systems to ensure maximum trading opportunities for our industry and it will promote Ontario's interests, especially in future discussions on a broader cap-and-trade system, not only across Canada but across North America. It will allow us, in effect, to align our system with the American system that President Obama's been talking about. It's a good first step.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Phil McNeely: In today's economic climate, I know some will be concerned about the impact of such a proposal on Ontario industries. Our government understands that this is a pivotal time for the province, for our environment, our economy and the future well-being of our people. We know that we face two enormous challenges: climate change and a global economic crisis. Both must be addressed.

As we act on the economic crisis, we must at the same time move forward to lay the foundation for a low-carbon economy. How will the minister ensure that cap-and-trade both protects and promotes Ontario businesses as they transition to the new, green economy?

Hon. John Gerretsen: We have been meeting as a ministry, together with the Ministry of Economic De-

velopment and Trade and industrial leaders from across the province, to discuss the system for the last four to five months. We've heard one consistent message, loud and clear, and that is that no-carbon pricing is coming and that they want certainty in the system. They also want a system that is in effect North America-wide.

Enabling the development of cap-and-trade through future regulations will provide the certainty that industry wants and needs. It will also allow us to establish a reliable price signal, which is what they're interested in, ensuring a level playing field for Ontario industry and avoiding duplication with federal regulations.

But what it's really all about is reducing greenhouse gas emissions so that all of us in Ontario can lead a better lifestyle, particularly for the younger generation, such as the class that is here from Our Lady of Lourdes School with Mr. Joe Bush, who's here—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

ELECTRONIC HEALTH INFORMATION

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: I'd like to go to the Premier again. We know that contracts worth about \$2 million were secretly awarded to the Courtyard Group. We also know that the wife of the head of Courtyard got a contract for \$268,000, which included such things as \$300 an hour for reading the New York Times, \$300 an hour for listening to voicemail, and \$300 an hour for talking to somebody on the subway. How can you justify this type of waste of taxpayer money?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Health.

Hon. David Caplan: The risk of not bringing in a transition team would have been further delays in the implementation of eHealth. As I said earlier, Smart Systems for Health, the legacy agency, was given an incorrect mandate by members opposite. My predecessor ordered an operational review, we've changed that organization, and, through its ashes, we see eHealth Ontario.

There's a need to move quickly. I do agree that Ontario is not where it should be when it comes to electronic health records in this province. That's why they did move fast. The new organization is improving transparency through increasing public disclosure of contracts. It's also co-operating, as I've mentioned earlier, with Mr. McCarter, our provincial Auditor General, as he does a review at the behest of the federal Auditor General. This is an organization which is committed to—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: I find it shocking that this minister doesn't condone that type of spending—I mean, that you do condone it and that you don't condemn it. It's simply unbelievable. It seems that wherever you go there's scandal, there's sloppy oversight and there's incompetence. You haven't been able to come forward with a 10-year strategic plan for health, and now, in this case, we have an agency that again has postponed eHealth until 2015. Why will you not resign and recognize you're over your head?

Hon. David Caplan: I don't agree with the member opposite. I don't think she really understands the importance—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member may want to be in his seat. Minister?

Hon. David Caplan: I disagree with the member. I think she doesn't understand the importance of electronic health and what it will do for patients in the province of Ontario. I know that, for example, a mother in Sioux Lookout sees the value in being able to get advice from a specialist at the Hospital for Sick Children without having to travel to Toronto during the winter. Just ask the librarian, for example, who lives in Waterloo with failing eyesight if she sees value in a wait-time information system that tells her she can get her cataract removed in less than one third of the time than she had to wait for that surgery when this government was first elected.

We're going to keep driving forward on innovations like that. I know that's difficult for the member opposite, because she didn't get it when she was on this side of the House. Clearly she doesn't get it today. But I can tell you that we will keep driving forward to ensure that Ontarians have better patient safety, that they have better health care systems and they have connected—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

DRIVE CLEAN

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Talking about driving, I have a question for the Minister of the Environment. As he knows, smog leads to the premature death of as many as 10,000 Ontarians a year. Reducing vehicle emissions is key to reducing smog. Can you assure Ontarians that the government's Drive Clean program is working as effectively as possible to identify high-emission vehicles and reduce smog in Ontario?

Hon. John Gerretsen: Let me put it this way: This government has been working for the last five years to improve the air-quality standards in so many different ways. We've introduced over 57 new air quality standards with only one thing in mind, and that is to make the air that we all breathe on a day-to-day basis better for everyone in this province. We're working hard on that. The Drive Clean program is working as well; we will continue to work on that. There's a lot of work that has been done. A lot more needs to be done in the future as well.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I'll certainly agree that a lot more work has to be done. The 2007 report indicates that Drive Clean reduced vehicle emissions by one third. The program is identifying fewer and fewer vehicles with high emissions each year. Test failure rates fell by almost 50% between 1999 and 2005. Concerns about Drive Clean testing units have been raised for years, and it's been asserted that as many as one third of these units do not meet California Bureau of Auto Repair standards. Minister, can you provide proof to this chamber and to Ontar-

ians that lower failure rates in Drive Clean tests are a reflection of cleaner cars and not the deficiency of the testing equipment itself?

Hon. John Gerretsen: Well, I think the member to a certain extent answered his own question. That is the fact that, in effect, through the Drive Clean program the standards have risen dramatically over the last number of years. Yes, cars are a lot cleaner now in the way they deal with fuels than they have in the past. A lot more work has been done and needs to be done in the future as well. But we've come a long way, and this program in the long run is to the benefit of all of us.

1110

ARTS AND CULTURAL FUNDING

Mr. Jim Brownell: My question is to the Minister of Culture. There are more than 400 community museums in Ontario that reflect the diversity of Ontario's histories and cultures. Community museums in Ontario provide us with the opportunity to learn about the growth and progress of our province. I know that museums and historical sites in my riding of Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry help instill in our citizens a sense of pride for the communities in which they live.

Providing all Ontarians with greater access to learn more about their cultural heritage is something the government should actively promote. In the government's 2007 election platform, the government committed to creating a fund which would enable museums to use new technology to make history more accessible and tangible to Ontarians. Would you please tell us what the status is of this fund?

Hon. M. Aileen Carroll: I'm delighted to respond to my colleague from Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry. I joined him just last summer—it seems longer than that in some ways—to tour a number of facilities in his riding. He's a tremendous supporter of the cultural agenda of this government. Those museums of which he spoke indeed provide us with an opportunity to learn about our past, and they contribute hugely to local economies by attracting millions of visitors every year from across Ontario and from outside.

Last week, I was delighted to announce that our government is investing \$6.5 million over four years to make Ontario's history more accessible. And how is that? Through innovative technology. This new museum and technology fund will enable museums of the 21st century to become centres of innovation promoting their culture and heritage. It's a tremendous initiative and one I'm delighted to enable.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Jim Brownell: I know community museums in my riding and all across Ontario will be happy to hear that the government is fulfilling its commitment to help museums use technology and innovative methods to increase and expand their reach beyond their local communities. Each year, more than three million people visit Ontario's community museums to learn about our unique

cultural heritage and to gain a better understanding of who we are as Ontarians. As the keepers and interpreters of our heritage, it is important that we provide ongoing support to help community museums maintain their collections and implement programming.

Again, can the Minister of Culture tell this House what investments the government has made to ensure that community museums have the resources to tell the stories of our province?

Hon. M. Aileen Carroll: The museums are indeed vital cultural institutions in our society and in the development and growth of our society. They engage us by increasing our understanding of the world through museum collections, museum programs and special events. Museums inspire passion for the communities in which we live and for this wonderful province. This new fund is going to build on our government's substantial investments in community museums. In 2007, our government nearly doubled our investment in the community museum operating grant to \$5 million, and since 2003 the Ministry of Culture has provided almost \$21 million in operating funds to museums throughout this province. We are committed to them, we understand how vital they are, and we will continue to support them.

ABORIGINAL PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

Mr. Gilles Bisson: My question is to the Premier. You will know that back in May 2009 both Jamie Goodwin and Ricardo Wesley died as a result of being incarcerated in a Kashechewan jail. Those buildings, those jails, those police detachments did not have the type of fire suppressant system or detection system needed in order to make sure that those prisoners were kept safe. The coroner's inquest, under section 43, has set the following recommendation: "It is recognized that as many as nineteen (19) of the NAPS detachments do not meet the National Building Code standards and do not have sprinkler systems installed." It says it recommends that Canada and Ontario, along with NAN, meet by June 30 in order "to determine the most expeditious way to resolve this ... problem." Do you plan on meeting this deadline?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Attorney General.

Hon. Christopher Bentley: I thank the member for the question. Of course, the deaths are very, very tragic circumstances. I know all of our sympathies go out to the families and to the friends. I'd like to thank the jury members for the very hard work that they did on this very, very difficult case. I know that the government, my colleague Minister Bartolucci, is reviewing the recommendations, taking them very, very seriously, and will make sure that whatever needs to be done will be done to ensure the safety of all persons who would be involved in circumstances in the future.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: The question was to the Premier, and we would have liked to have had a response from

him because, quite frankly, this cannot continue to happen.

Your minister Mr. Bartolucci met with NAN, NAPS, me and others on numerous occasions in order to deal with this issue, much before the inquiry had finished its recommendations.

We now know that there are a number of detachments that don't meet the minimum requirement to make sure that police officers and those who are incarcerated within those police stations are kept safe. Our question to you is simply this: Do you find that this is acceptable, and if not, what are you going to do about it, and when?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: As I indicated, we're taking the recommendations very, very seriously. Whatever needs to be done will be done.

To put some of the other comments of my friend in a little bit of perspective, we have invested in First Nations policing, which we take as a priority. We have invested \$112 million since 2003, \$30 million in 2007-08 alone, and that represents, just for the member's information, a 37% increase since 2003. So we are serious about making the investments. We're making the investments. We're working with our other partners in justice—the federal government and others—and we're taking the recommendations to heart, and we'll be coming forward with whatever is required in the future to ensure the safety of all.

RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

Ms. Leeanna Pendergast: My question this morning is for the Minister of Research and Innovation. Minister, earlier this month, the Premier's Innovation Awards took place here in Toronto at MaRS, one of the world's top research incubation centres.

The importance of innovation can be seen in the fact that our Premier had the vision to create the Ministry of Research and Innovation in 2005 and make innovation part of our five-point economic plan. Yet for many of us, it's difficult to envision the impact that the phenomenal research undertaken by Ontario's world-class scientists will have on our daily lives.

Could the minister please tell us about the importance of recognizing the world-class ideas and innovators such as those who won the Premier's Innovation Awards this month?

Hon. John Wilkinson: I want to thank my friend from Kitchener-Conestoga for the question.

What we do in this province is, we actually celebrate our world-class excellence. The reason there is a brain gain into this province is because one of the things that we do is actually celebrate and tell those special people that we are so very proud of them.

The Premier's Summit Award is a \$5-million award: \$2.5 million from our ministry and \$2.5 million matched by the institution. I think of this year's two recipients of this penultimate award: Dr. Ben Neel, who was recruited from Harvard University, who is a leading cancer specialist and the head of the Ontario Cancer Institute;

and Dr. John Wallace at McMaster, who is the new head of the Farncombe Family Digestive Health Research Institute in Hamilton. Both of these amazing scientists are doing groundbreaking work. In this province, we understand that we have to take great ideas and turn those into great jobs, and both of these unbelievably qualified and—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Ms. Leeanna Pendergast: Minister, in my riding of Kitchener-Conestoga, a company by the name of Unitron is breaking new ground in the field of hearing instruments. At the awards, it was announced that Unitron won a Premier's Catalyst Award as the company with the best innovation, for their Yuu intelligent hearing aid.

Released in 2007, the Yuu is a premium hearing aid that quickly established a new industry benchmark for performance, aesthetics and ease of use. In an industry that's growing by 3% to 6% a year, Unitron has seen sales increase 30% annually since the launch of the Yuu. Pardon? That was 30% annually since the launch of the Yuu.

Could the minister outline the importance of supporting groundbreaking, innovative companies such as Unitron through the Premier's Catalyst Award?

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Hon. John Wilkinson: There are a number of awards, and the thing that struck me, I say to my friend who represents part of Canada's Technology Triangle, is the number of firms and individuals from the Waterloo region.

Unitron is a good example. They make, we're very proud to say, the greatest, the best hearing aid in the world today, because of groundbreaking technology. We're proud of them, but also Dr. Bin Ma, who is part of Bioinformatics Solutions, who added groundbreaking work on the identification of proteins, which allows our researchers to find new and novel cures. As well, I do want to pay tribute to his colleague—and I'm right with you here, Mr. Speaker—from the University of Waterloo, Dr. Ming Li.

But particularly, I want to talk about Dr. Scott Vanstone, who created Certicom. In our BlackBerry, the reason that they're secure is because we have world-leading encryption software provided by Certicom—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

MUNICIPAL PLANNING

Mrs. Julia Munro: My question is to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. Minister, in the gallery is a delegation of citizens from the town of Innisfil, led by Mayor Brian Jackson. They are here today because they are worried about the future of their community.

Preserving the high quality of life enjoyed by residents of Innisfil depends on preserving the town's economic viability and its tax base. Barrie's desire to annex large sections of Innisfil puts the town's viability and quality of life at risk.

Minister, what message do you have for my Innisfil constituents who are seeking to keep their town a great place to live?

Hon. Jim Watson: I thank the honourable member for her question, and I do welcome the delegation from Innisfil. I know Mayor Jackson was here just a few moments ago, and we thank him in absentia for the good work that he and his council do, day in and day out, on behalf of the people of Innisfil.

I've always maintained that the best solution to these kinds of disputes between one jurisdiction and another is a local solution, and that's why I convened a meeting of Barrie officials on February 11 and Innisfil officials on February 18, which the honourable member attended, and then Simcoe county officials on March 4. I further convened a meeting of all three groups, facilitated by my ministry, on March 23. Regrettably, to date, we have not been able to find a local solution.

Let me quote the mayor of Innisfil when he said that Minister Watson "wants us at the table and he wants us to work this out ... he said he is not going to allow" this to "drag on for another year"—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mrs. Julia Munro: The town of Innisfil is a leader when it comes to sensible development and the environment. Innisfil's council and citizens have worked hard with the rest of Simcoe county to devise a sensible growth plan to meet your Places to Grow requirements.

Innisfil is an environmental leader as well, particularly when it comes to Lake Simcoe. On the key issue of discharge of phosphorus into Lake Simcoe, the city of Barrie puts two and a half times as much phosphorus per litre in the lake as Innisfil does.

To continue providing quality services, including environmental protection, Innisfil needs a secure tax base. Will you guarantee Innisfil that it will not lose its ability to provide services at an affordable cost?

Hon. Jim Watson: We know that when one community prospers, the adjoining community also prospers, so when Innisfil is doing well, Barrie does well, and when Barrie does well, Innisfil does well and the entire county does well.

But the business community and those people who want to create jobs need certainty. They need stability and they need predictability when it comes to what's going on with boundaries and what's going on with growth plans, and we want to make sure that we are in a position to help facilitate the growth and job opportunities for the people of Innisfil, for Barrie and for Simcoe county.

In my meeting with the mayor of Innisfil on February 18, I asked the mayor, "What would you do if you were in my shoes?" And he replied, "I would impose a solution because I would have no other options." We still want a local solution, but at the end of the day, we feel that the province does have a role to ensure that the growth—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

Mr. Rosario Marchese: My question is to the Minister of Education. Minister, you and the Premier have stated very clearly that the demographic information on the school information finder website will remain. You said that you had some positive feedback from parents on this, and I want to share some of the feedback that I got from parents.

"I appreciate your voice on this ridiculous website. This site contains information out of context and should not be applied as the ministry implies."

Another one: "Thanks for sticking up for those smaller, rural, and other demographically challenged schools, students, teachers, and support staff."

Another: "I completely share your views; however, find very saddening and disturbing that the Minister of Education and Premier are seeing it quite differently and stereotypically."

In the face of this kind of opposition, why do you insist on leaving this unnecessary demographic information on the website?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I'll just share some e-mails that we have received. "I was very pleased to see the data presented in such a clear and useful way. The comparison tool really allows people to process and understand the information better ... removing the ability to analyze the data from the website doesn't change that, and both the ministry and education interest groups would do well to focus more on solving the problem and less on protecting people from valuable information."

Another one: "There's no question that programs should be informed by evidence and that evidence should be made public."

We can have this back and forth. What is important is that there is some disagreement. There needs to be a conversation about what data, what information should be available on this website. As I said to the member many times, we are going to be having a round table with all of the stakeholders and we are going to be having that conversation. But we believe that profiles of schools and information should be made available in a consistent and—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Minister, there isn't much back and forth. The federations are against it—all of the federations, clearly against it. OPSBA and the trustee associations are against it. Student trustees are against it. Most of the parents that you know who support you are against it. You've got very little by way of a back-and-forth, I say to you.

We support the idea of making information available to parents. Parents can benefit from knowing if the school has a physical education or music teacher, a teacher librarian or wraparound daycare. That's fine. However, nothing that you can add to this site is going to make the demographic information more acceptable.

We are happy that you are consulting about this, but will you at least agree to remove the offensive, un-

necessary demographic information from the site while you are engaged in this consultation process?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: What I will guarantee is that we will have that conversation with those people who are interested in talking about what other information should be on this site so that the school profiles can be as complete as possible. That is the conversation that I have had with all of the stakeholders who sit at the partnership table and who have expressed their concerns to me. I think they're very aware that I am open, that we are open, to having that conversation.

It seems that at the root of this member's concern is that somehow there's a problem if there's a disagreement in the education sector between some folks who hold one opinion and others who hold another. The fact is that even among the folks who support us, there can be disagreements. We can have that conversation. As I've said before, having those conversations means that at the end of the day, we have a stronger relationship and a—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

Mr. Dave Levac: My question is for the Minister of Education as well. In the riding of Brant, as in other ridings across the province, grade 3 and grade 6 students are sitting down this week and next week to write the EQAO test for reading, writing and mathematics. I wish them all the best of luck.

I know that the students in my riding have been tremendously improving since 2003. That speaks highly of the classroom teachers, the principals, the support staff and the parents, not to mention the students themselves. For example, in 2007-08, results of the Brant Haldimand Norfolk Catholic District School Board indicated that the percentages of grade 3 students at or above the provincial standard in math was 71%, up from 57% in 2003. At Grand Erie, last year's results had grade 6 students doing better in reading: 61% when it had been only 52%.

I understand that we haven't reached our target of 75% in the entire province. Would you tell us what that trend is across the province—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you, Minister?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: In fact, across the province, there is exactly the trend that the member for Brant is speaking of. As a former educator, he knows how critical it is that we have an ability to track what's going on in our schools. We've got a majority of boards where we see a noticeable improvement in the writing, reading and math scores for those grade 3 and grade 6 students.

Right now, 65% of Ontario's grade 3 and grade 6 students are achieving 75% or higher on their EQAO test. That's a B grade, so it's a substantial majority of kids achieving at that high level. When we took office, just 54% were at that level, so there's been a significant increase since we've been in office; that's 11% since we came in office. It's clear from the facts that the resources

we've put into the system to allow teachers to work with their kids, professional development—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Dave Levac: In my first classroom I had 62 students, and I can tell you that I've been visiting the schools in the riding and I've seen smaller class sizes, more teachers, more support staff and more individual attention that is so critical to the students' success.

In the Grand Erie board, 100% of the primary classes have 23 students or less and 90% of the primary classes have 20 students or less. There are 132 new teachers and 314 new EAs, thank you very much, and all of this despite 3,000 fewer students.

In the Haldimand Catholic board, 100% of primary classes have 23 students or less and 91% of primary classes have 20 students or less—40% before the cap. There are 52 new teachers and 110 new EAs despite declining enrolment as well.

There's been criticism by some people about teaching to the test. Is this an accurate assumption about our approach?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: What the teachers in our schools do is teach to the curriculum. The tests that are being administered this week—and I wish all the students in Ontario who were sitting down to write those tests last week and this week all the best of luck. Those tests, as opposed to being standardized tests, are tests that look at the curriculum and the way the curriculum is being delivered. What we do is use them as a diagnostic tool. So they are not a randomized, standardized test that is used to take a snapshot of a particular part of the province; they are used as diagnostics in every one of our schools and in every one of our boards in order to improve the practice of our teachers and to improve the outcomes for our students. That's what they're for.

Indeed, when the NDP government introduced the EQAO process, that's exactly what they were looking for. They were looking for that—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

ELECTRONIC HEALTH INFORMATION

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: My question is to the Premier. We've been witnessing quite a spectacle here today, with the Minister of Health condoning scandalous misuse of tax dollars by officials at eHealth. Premier, at least earlier today you said you were concerned about some of these revelations, and in the past you've indicated that you support greater involvement of legislators in the business of government. I'm going to test your sincerity here today. Will you agree to have Minister Caplan and the CEO of eHealth appear next week before the Standing Committee on Public Accounts to explain just what's happened at that agency?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I appreciate the overture made by my colleague, but I think what the public would prefer is that the Auditor General be allowed to continue his work. He's independent, he is non-partisan, he is ob-

jective, he's impartial and he's nothing if not thorough. The good news is that he's already in there. He's on the ground and he's making some inquiries. I think we should allow him to complete his work.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The time for question period has ended.

There being no deferred votes, this House stands recessed until 1 o'clock this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1134 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Reza Moridi: It's my pleasure to welcome the following individuals to the east gallery: Mr. Sarkis Assadourian, a former member of the House of Commons for Don Valley North in 1993 and Brampton Centre in 1997; Dr. Reza Baraheni, former professor at the University of Toronto, former president of PEN Canada, poet, writer, literary critic and human rights activist; Mr. Hassan Zerehi, editor-in-chief of Shahrvand Publications; and Mr. Bahram Bahrami, editor-in-chief of Mehr-E-Iran.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

BRAD FORWARD

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: It's my pleasure to be back in the Legislature today.

Firmly back on Canadian soil, I want to take this opportunity to congratulate Brad Forward and his wife, Sandra, back from their recent trip to Norway for the World Driving Championship. Brad has racked up 166 wins this season, with a total of 3,289 career wins. Forward, now residing in Woodstock, Ontario, represented Canada last week in Norway.

Earlier this year, eight of Canada's best drivers converged at Fraser Downs for a chance to represent our country in the World Driving Championship, and with trips down victory lane, Brad Forward earned the 2009 National Driving Championship title with a total of 65 points.

I want to congratulate him once again for representing the people of Ontario and the people of Canada at these very important championships. I just want Brad to know that this Legislature is proud of him.

CITY OF BRAMPTON

Mrs. Linda Jeffrey: I rise in the house today to recognize the city of Brampton, which recently received a prestigious five-star rating and special recognition at the eighth annual WinterLights Celebrations symposium and awards ceremony held in Prince George, British Columbia. Brampton was one of 32 participating communities from across Canada and one of only seven cities

which was identified as having delivered a unique winter environment experience for its residents and visitors alike.

WinterLights Celebrations is the winter edition of the Communities in Bloom program, which seeks to promote community involvement through the enhancement of neighbourhoods and public spaces with colourful displays and staging of festive events and winter-related activities. The program aims to promote Canada as a winter tourism destination, as well as creating awareness of cultural and social events during the winter months.

The city of Brampton received special mention by the judges for their newest recreation facility: the Cassie Campbell recreation centre. This is a 65,000-square-foot facility which houses an eight-lane indoor pool, two ice pads, a daycare facility and a community policing station.

Congratulations to the city of Brampton and Brampton city council on winning this award and showing the innovation I know they possess in making Brampton a destination for locals and tourists alike during the winter months.

ABORIGINAL LAND DISPUTE

Mr. Toby Barrett: I have a question: When is the McGuinty government going to commence to enforce the rule of law in the province of Ontario? For example, why does a mining company like Platinex have to launch a \$70-million lawsuit against this government, alleging in part that the province has failed to enforce the rule of law?

As many know, Platinex leases crown land from the province for mining exploration, and according to today's National Post, under the headline "Mining Company Warns of Another Caledonia," an Ontario Superior Court justice ruled that the company took adequate steps to consult with the area KI native community at Big Trout Lake, and that preliminary drilling would do minimal harm to the land. However, KI protesters consistently have shut down operations. Both KI and Platinex are equal victims of the Ontario government's failure to adequately intervene in these disputes.

These kinds of ongoing native land disputes—we see them in Caledonia and Haldimand and now Brantford—have cost Ontario tens of millions of dollars. It's been over three years—three years of fear and intimidation, with no respect for the rule of law. Despite pleas from this side, the situation has been allowed to fester.

Now it looks as if Mr. McGuinty is willing to have it happen elsewhere in this province. I've seen the damage, and I don't wish this on any other community.

JIM TOVEY

Mr. Charles Sousa: I rise today to recognize and congratulate the 2009 Mississauga Citizen of the Year, Mr. Jim Tovey. A long-time resident of Lakeview, Jim has been a tireless community advocate on issues of culture, planning, environment and health. He has also

been a strong voice in calling for the protection and revitalization of our waterfront. Jim's efforts were critical in achieving our community's goals of closing the Lakeview coal power plant and ensuring that the waterfront will never again be used for power generation.

Under his leadership, the community has developed a shared vision for the area, which includes park space, a heritage walk and destination attractions. This vision has excited the imagination of the whole city and has brought people together to work towards a common goal.

Jim is known for his active involvement in protecting and promoting our local history. These days, he's working to convert a small-arms building in Lakeview into an arts and cultural hub while preserving its historical significance. As its name suggests, the building was a small-arms factory during the Second World War and played a vital role in our nation's war efforts. So far, his efforts have saved the building from demolition, and he continues to pursue further protections for the site.

Jim Tovey is indeed most deserving of being named Mississauga's Citizen of the Year. His ongoing and selfless service to our local community and to Mississauga as a whole has already made a tremendous impact.

One day, when our grandchildren in south Mississauga walk along the pristine shores of a vibrant and accessible waterfront, the acres of green space, heritage site and thriving cultural attractions, it will be in large part because of the outstanding leadership Jim Tovey has shown today.

On behalf of the Legislative Assembly and the residents of Mississauga South, thank you, Jim, and congratulations.

NATIONAL ACCESS AWARENESS WEEK

Ms. Sylvia Jones: As we mark National Access Awareness Week, we are reminded of the barriers that those with a disability face every day.

Right in our own backyard, deaf students at the University of Toronto are faced with not only the challenges that come with having a hearing impairment, but the fact that they are also facing accessibility challenges right on campus.

Some of those barriers include being forced to withdraw from courses due to a lack of interpreter services within the accessibility services office, course instructors not prepared to deal with deaf students, and office staff unaware of how to place and receive calls through a relay service, just to name a few.

Each year, National Access Awareness Week encourages Canadians to think about and find ways to break down barriers faced by individuals with disabilities. Access means more than just removing physical barriers. It means changes in attitudes and supports that allow all people with visible or invisible disabilities to be part of community life.

People with learning, developmental and psychiatric disabilities or other invisible impairments should not be forgotten when we strive for equal access. It is very im-

portant that we raise awareness for accessibility standards not only during this week of recognition but every day. Let's make Ontario a leader in accessibility, starting with the University of Toronto.

LEONARD AND LOUISE PRESKETT

Mr. Michael Prue: On May 16, the people of East York and the surrounding environs got together to celebrate the 70th anniversary of Louise and Len Preskett. That's a long time to be married—70 years.

The couple met back in the 1930s at a party in England. They got married just before the Second World War, had one child, and Len was sent overseas. He served in places like North Africa, Italy and Sicily. But on the trip from North Africa to Sicily, his ship was bombed and he was presumed lost at sea. The army, of course, had to go and tell Louise Preskett that her husband was missing in action and presumed dead. She had one child and she had another she was about to deliver a few weeks later. You can imagine how she felt.

A few weeks after the second child was born, the Salvation Army came to the house and told Louise that her husband had been found. He had suffered a concussion and had been washed ashore, but he was alive. You can imagine how that affected both of them.

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Len came back, and after the war, they decided to move to Canada. They moved first of all to Parkdale and later to East York, where they have lived for the last 42 years. They're an amazing couple.

If I can just have a couple of seconds: On their 70th anniversary, they got placards from the Queen, the Governor General, the Prime Minister, the Premier, local politicians and the media. All of East York stands to celebrate with them.

GEMS OF THE LAKESHORE

Ms. Laurel C. Broten: I rise today to congratulate the small businesses and community organizations recognized at the third annual Gems of the Lakeshore. Each year, our community recognizes businesses and community organizations that are unique to south Etobicoke and make our community a more vibrant place to live.

Earlier this month, I joined with members of our community, the joint BIA and the Lakeshore Community Partnership at the historic Assembly Hall in my riding for an evening of celebration and recognition of businesses and organizations in six categories: restaurants, cultural and recreation, community services, retail businesses, service businesses and, for the first time, quick-food businesses.

The 560 recognition forms submitted this year by local residents who shop, frequent or visit the businesses and community groups certainly reflect the great commitment the residents of Etobicoke-Lakeshore have to the services and products uniquely offered in Etobicoke-Lakeshore, making our community a must-visit destination.

I'm pleased to recognize this year's Gems of the Lakeshore recipients here in the Legislature: Siam Princess, Assembly Hall, LAMP Community Health Centre, The Loot Lady, Pina B's Salon and Spa, and Chasers Juice.

I hope that all members will join me in congratulating all of the great small businesses and community groups in my riding. I invite you all to the Etobicoke-Lakeshore community to see what our Gems have to offer. Congratulations to all of them.

CHILDREN'S WISH FOUNDATION

Mr. Mike Colle: Each year, thousands of Canadian children between the ages of 3 and 17 are diagnosed with a life-threatening illness. Today in the Legislature, we have one of those very precious children here with us: Neilah Brooks. Neilah is here, in her beautiful dress, with Rosemin, her mom, and Sandy Hancox, from the Children's Wish Foundation.

As you know, the Children's Wish Foundation is celebrating its 25th anniversary. It's the most recognized charity when it comes to granting wishes for children diagnosed with high-risk, life-threatening illnesses. The magic of a wish provides children and their families with an opportunity to share the joy of a special experience and escape from the day-to-day challenges of the illnesses.

I commend the Children's Wish Foundation for their commitment to bringing wishes to life for children, who benefit, and for supporting their parents and families during these most difficult circumstances.

The Children's Wish Foundation is a symbol of hope and a chance to provide families with special memories. I invite all members of the Legislature to acknowledge the Children's Wish Foundation and the work they have done with more than 4,000 families in Ontario, and the work they continue to do with families across Canada.

I hope that your wish is a very, very special one, Neilah. Welcome again, and have a great deal of fun, okay?

INFRASTRUCTURE PROGRAM FUNDING

Mr. Jeff Leal: The McGuinty Liberals know that in order to compete in the global economy, we need to invest in our strongest asset, our people, and work hard to overcome the neglect done to our roads, schools, hospitals and public institutions by the previous government.

The Conservatives refused to invest in people and refused to invest in our province's infrastructure. In 2002-03, for example, they invested only \$1.8 billion. Ontarians knew they deserved better, and they chose change.

The McGuinty Liberals know that strong public services are the key to stable families and sustainable communities, and we launched an ambitious plan to invest the unheard-of sum of \$30 billion in infrastructure

through the ReNew Ontario program. This plan was completed in 2008-09, a full year ahead of schedule.

We on this side of the House have again responded to challenging times with an additional \$32.5 billion over the next two years, supporting 300,000 jobs and making strategic investments in our people and our future economic prosperity.

These investments underscore the McGuinty Liberals' commitment to strengthening our citizens and improving our public services. While there's more to do, we'll continue to work hard to build strong communities for all Ontarians.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

CONDOMINIUM OWNERS PROTECTION ACT, 2009

LOI DE 2009 SUR LA PROTECTION DES PROPRIÉTAIRES DE CONDOMINIUMS

Mr. Marchese moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 186, An Act to amend various Acts with respect to condominiums / *Projet de loi 186, Loi modifiant diverses lois en ce qui a trait aux condominiums.*

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member for a short statement?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Condominium owners haven't had a voice since 1972, when the first Condominium Act was introduced. They haven't had adequate representation or advocacy since then. Changes were made in 1999, but nothing changed for condominium owners. This bill is an attempt to address that by changes to the Condominium Act, including the Ontario New Home Warranties Plan Act and also the building code.

TECHNICAL STANDARDS AND SAFETY STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 2009

LOI DE 2009 MODIFIANT DES LOIS EN CE QUI A TRAIT AUX NORMES TECHNIQUES ET À LA SÉCURITÉ

Mr. Takhar moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 187, An Act to amend the Technical Standards and Safety Act, 2000 and the Safety and Consumer Statutes Administration Act, 1996 / *Projet de loi 187, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2000 sur les normes techniques et la sécurité et la Loi de 1996 sur l'application de certaines lois traitant de sécurité et de services aux consommateurs.*

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member for a short statement?

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: I will make the statement during ministerial statements.

MOTIONS

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: I believe we have unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding private members' public business.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Agreed? Agreed.

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: I move that, notwithstanding standing order 98(g), the requirement for notice be waived with respect to ballot item 22.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

TECHNICAL SAFETY STANDARDS

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: I'm honoured to rise in the House today to announce that our government is taking steps to further strengthen public safety in Ontario.

Ontario's technical safety standards are among the best in the world. They generally work well and protect Ontarians every day. Our government has confidence in the Technical Standards and Safety Authority, which we normally call TSSA.

The TSSA is a not-for-profit corporation formed under the Corporations Act. The TSSA is responsible for the day-to-day delivery of regulatory services and technical safety in five key areas in this province. These five key areas are upholstered and stuffed articles; boilers and pressure vessels; amusement and elevating devices; fuels safety; and operating engineers.

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Keeping the public safe is a top priority for this government.

As I mentioned—and it bears repeating—Ontario's technical safety standards are among the best in the world. However, where improvements can be made, it is our duty to make those improvements and ensure that we are constantly working to have the best systems and standards in place for the people of Ontario. Today our government is proposing amendments to the Technical Standards and Safety Act, 2000, that are designed to further improve accountability and transparency. They are also designed to strengthen Ontario's public safety system.

Before I get into the details, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the team from my ministry who worked tirelessly on this legislation. They have all joined us here today. I would like them to stand up and be recognized. I would also like to thank my parliamentary assistant, the member from Hamilton Mountain, for the work that she has done regarding this legislation as well.

Here is a summary of some of the proposed legislative changes:

First, our proposed amendments would require the TSSA to appoint a chief risk and safety officer. This position would provide independent review of the TSSA and report annually, and publicly, on how the TSSA is meeting its public safety mandate.

Second, our proposed amendments would give the minister the power to guide the strategic focus of the TSSA by issuing policy directives.

Third, our proposed amendments would give the minister the power to appoint the chair and the vice-chair to the TSSA board.

Fourth, we propose to allow the Auditor General to access TSSA records should the auditor choose to conduct an audit.

Fifth, the proposed amendments to the act would require the minister and the TSSA to enter into a memorandum of understanding on the governance of the corporation.

Sixth, our proposed changes would allow the minister to ask for reviews, when deemed necessary, relating to the performance, governance and accountability of financial matters of the TSSA. The proposed amendments would also give the minister the authority to appoint an administrator for the purpose of assuming control of the TSSA if it is in the public interest.

Two other proposed legislative amendments address recommendations made last November by Ontario's propane safety review panel. The panel reported that the building blocks for propane safety in Ontario are in place, and that these building blocks have served the people of this province well over the years. However, improvements can be made, and we are moving ahead with making those improvements.

Among their 40 recommendations, the panel advised that our government provide the TSSA with clear authority to respond to imminent hazards to public safety and charge the cost back to the operators. Our proposed amendments address this recommendation.

In response to other recommendations, we propose to require propane operators in Ontario to carry insurance as a condition of licensing. The remainder of the proposed changes are in addition to these recommendations that were made by the propane expert panel. Our proposed amendments to the Technical Standards and Safety Act clearly demonstrate that we are serious about building on our province's technical safety systems to keep Ontarians safe.

On behalf of the government of Ontario, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the chair of the TSSA board of directors, Rudy Riedl, vice-chair George Irwin,

and TSSA's president and chief executive officer, Kathy Milsom, for their outstanding work in acting upon the recommendations made last November by Ontario's propane safety review panel.

The people of Ontario can be confident that we are taking steps to make this province even safer, and they can take pride in choosing to work, live and play in a province that considers technical safety paramount.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for giving me this opportunity to introduce this legislation and make this statement.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Responses?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I'm pleased to rise in the House today on behalf of the Progressive Conservative caucus in response to this minister's bill.

This piece of legislation, as you know, Mr. Speaker, is long overdue. I believe it's inherent of this House and the members in it to ensure that all Ontarians have the safety and protection they require and they deserve as residents of this province.

When it comes to public safety, there are no excuses good enough to not respond immediately. What happened on Sunday, August 10, 2008, in Toronto was not only frightening, but it was avoidable. This avoidable propane explosion at the Sunrise Propane industrial gas facility affected what is estimated to be more than 10,000 people. All residents and business owners within 1.6 kilometres were asked to leave the area, forcing them to close their businesses and, in many cases, flee their own home.

The Technical Standards and Safety Authority, TSSA, is the agency responsible for ensuring safety in a range of Ontario industries, including propane facilities, which extend from gas stations selling propane for vehicles and barbecues to large-scale distributors. This agency falls under the direction and authority of the Minister of Consumer Services. At the time of that propane explosion, the minister failed to take any immediate action; today, he is proposing more authority for himself. We cannot be assured on this side of the Legislature that he will act in that capacity.

During and immediately after the Sunrise explosion, the McGuinty government and this minister had an obligation to act immediately to secure public safety and they neglected to do just that. It is the responsibility of the government to demonstrate that public safety comes first by looking at ways to act instead of finding excuses not to.

This bill, as I mentioned, is long overdue. This bill should have been implemented six years ago. We didn't need this bill for the minister to act immediately; he chose not to. Following the propane explosion, the Liberal government dithered the time away and they failed to protect Ontarians and consumers. Immediately in the aftermath, then-Progressive Conservative leader John Tory visited the site several times. Mr. Tory, with the support of this caucus, made recommendations immediately so that we could deal with the crisis so many Torontonians and so many Ontarians were facing. Yet

this minister continued to fail to act. It took him more than four days to actually visit the site when Ontarians were in crisis.

Months following the propane explosion, the TSSA, under the direction of this minister, developed the action plan to reaudit to further assure Ontarians of the safety of propane-filling facilities in the province. Upon reviewing the TSSA Action Plan for Propane Safety Review Recommendations, November 13, 2008, I can see that they have called for 40 recommendations to further enhance Ontario's safety systems, none of which included the PC caucus suggestions. We in the PC caucus are now excited to see that Mr. McGuinty and his government are finally following through and acting to ensure that Ontarians are safe and protected.

I'd like to reiterate that this bill and its new regulations have not come fast enough. The destruction and lives that were lost as a result of the Sunrise Propane explosion can never be compensated, and we believe the McGuinty government and this minister need to accept full responsibility for their failure to act in a timely, appropriate and decisive fashion. Our party called for a comprehensive and immediate action plan on the issue, but our suggestions went unheard.

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We in the PC caucus look forward to working through this legislation with all members of the House to enhance and further advance the protection of all Ontarians. The safety of Ontarians should be a priority—not just a top priority but the priority—the safety of all Ontarians. There are many outstanding problems that the McGuinty Liberal government has not addressed as a result of the August explosion.

I'd like to thank you again, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to address this legislation. I want to commit to the minister that we will work with him to ensure that all Ontarians are safe.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: It was indeed interesting to hear the commentary from the minister. One of his lines that I enjoyed best was that the technical safety standards we have here in Ontario "are among the best in the world." That may be true, but if they are kept in a glass case, if they are only rolled out after an explosion, if they are only shown to people and given to them as a demonstration of the depth of commitment, then frankly they're useless. No matter how beautiful a piece of legislation, if there is not enforcement and if there is not a framework, a body set up to enforce, then those laws are not worthwhile.

You should know that in November 2004, there was a propane fire and explosion in Bowmanville. Hundreds were evacuated. Highway 401 had to be shut down. Frankly, that should have been a clear signal to this government that the privatization of regulation was a failure, that they had to act, that in fact the body that had been set up by the former Harris government to privatize regulation was not doing the job that had to be done. Clearly, on the first strike they didn't notice.

Strike two: In the summer of 2008 we had the explosion at Sunrise Propane. Again, we had a situation

in which a large number of people were at risk, where the citizens of North York had to be evacuated, where local politicians like Councillor Maria Augimeri had to deal with fallout from a situation where they didn't have regulatory authority, where in fact this government had regulatory authority.

Privatization of regulation has failed. We have seen two substantial examples. Remember: After the Sunrise Propane explosion the TSSA didn't even have a full list of all the facilities. Within a few weeks, a number of facilities—many dozens—had been shut down. The question I have to ask is, if they had to be shut down then, why had they not been shut down earlier? Why were there not inspections going on? Why was there not a comprehensive list of facilities in place? All I can say is that there was an abject failure of this corporation to fulfill its mandate and protect the public.

The amendments that have been brought forward today are an admission that the privatization of regulation has failed. What the minister has done is taken a lot more power and brought it into his hands. Frankly, it's still a failure to do fully what has to be done.

The Harris era privatization of regulation is a legacy that has to be cast off. This government, in 2003, presented itself as the alternative, the change that Ontario needed, but in fact they have found the legacy of that government one that is too tempting to let go of, one that they want to hold on to, one that they want to perpetuate.

We have had two strikes. Will we have to have a third significant propane explosion or a third significant industrial accident to get this government to actually cast off that legacy of privatization of regulation, take the regulatory framework into its own hands and actually protect the people of Ontario? Do we have to wait that long? Apparently so.

PETITIONS

CEMETERIES

Mr. Jim Brownell: I have a petition, and it reads as follows:

"Whereas Ontario's cemeteries are an important part of our cultural heritage, and Ontario's inactive cemeteries are constantly at risk of closure and removal; and

"Ontario's cemeteries are an irreplaceable part of the province's cultural heritage;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"The government must pass Bill 149, the Inactive Cemeteries Protection Act, 2009, to prohibit the relocation of inactive cemeteries in the province of Ontario."

As I agree with this petition, I shall sign and send it to the clerks' table.

TAXATION

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas residents in Dufferin-Caledon do not want the McGuinty Liberals' new sales tax, which will raise the cost of goods and services they use every day; and

"Whereas the McGuinty Liberals' new sales tax of 13% will cause everyone to pay more for gasoline for their cars, heat, telephone, cable and Internet services for their homes, and will be applied to home sales over \$400,000; and

"Whereas the McGuinty Liberals' new sales tax of 13% will cause everyone to pay more for meals under \$4, haircuts, funeral services, gym memberships, newspapers, and lawyer and accountant fees; and

"Whereas the McGuinty Liberals' new sales tax grab will affect everyone in the province: seniors, students, families and low-income Ontarians;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the McGuinty Liberal government not increase taxes for Ontario families."

I support this petition, affix my name to it and give it to page Joseph.

AIR QUALITY

Mr. Charles Sousa: I have a petition that reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ministry of the Environment ... conducted 22 months of ambient air monitoring and determined that the Clarkson, Mississauga, airshed study area was taxed for respirable particulate matter (PM2.5); and....

"Whereas the study found that emissions of acrolein and acrylonitrile exceeded provincial limits; and....

"Whereas the MOE stated that it would focus on achieving reductions of the target pollutants from the 57 identified emitters that currently operate in the area; and

"Whereas the Ontario Power Authority is accepting proposals from companies for the operation of a gas-fired power plant in the Clarkson airshed study area that would see a new, very significant source of additional pollution into an airshed already determined as stressed by the MOE;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That no contract be awarded by the Ontario Power Authority for the operation of any gas-fired power plant that would impact the Clarkson airshed study area."

I'll sign it and provide it to Sarah.

LONG-TERM CARE

Ms. Sylvia Jones: A petition to the Parliament of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontarians who now live in long-term-care homes are increasingly older, frailer and have greater complex care needs; and

"Whereas our elder parents, family and friends deserve to live with dignity and respect; and

"Whereas the McGuinty Liberal government failed to revolutionize long-term care and broke its promise to seniors to provide \$6,000 in personal care per resident; and

"Whereas five years of Liberal inaction has restricted Ontario's ability to meet the demands of our aging population; and

"Whereas more than 24,000 Ontarians are currently waiting for an LTC bed; and

"Whereas Ontario funds significantly less resident care than Alberta, British Columbia, Manitoba and New Brunswick; and

"Whereas dedicated LTC homes are short-staffed and have not been given resources to hire enough front-line workers to provide the level of care residents require; and

"Whereas devoted LTC staff are burdened by cumbersome government regulations; and

"Whereas some 35,000 seniors are living in LTC beds which do not meet more home-like design standards introduced in 1998 by the former PC government;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the McGuinty government must enhance long-term care by:

"—initiating a sector-wide staffing increase of 4,500 full-time positions within a year;

"—expediting the redevelopment of Ontario's 35,000 oldest long-term-care beds by providing adequate support and funding;

"—achieving an average of three worked hours of personal care per day within a year;

"—simplifying the regulations which govern nursing homes;

"—producing a comprehensive plan with benchmarks to reduce LTC wait lists of more than 24,000 people; and

"—addressing inflationary pressures by adequately funding the increased operating costs of LTC homes."

I support this petition, am pleased to affix my name to it and give it to page Ajoy.

PUBLIC HEALTH

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have a petition from about 500 people from the area of Grey Bruce, and it goes as follows:

"Whereas millions of dollars provided by the taxpayers of Grey and Bruce counties, and indeed from the whole of the province of Ontario, have recently been squandered on a huge, expensive new building for the Grey Bruce public health unit that now sits half-empty; and

"Whereas the health unit has now laid off several front-line staff and in fact proposes further layoffs, compromising the delivery of vital health services as

mandated under the Health Protection and Promotion Act; and

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"Whereas the front-line workers have identified several areas where health protection and promotion programs are not meeting the level of service mandated by the act; and

"Whereas even a single dysfunctional public health unit can put our citizens at risk of an epidemic" or a pandemic;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"The Minister of Health should immediately order an assessment, under section 82 of the Health Protection and Promotion Act, of the Grey Bruce public health unit and the Grey Bruce board of health, including an audit of their finances and management practices."

I support this petition, I will affix my name to it and send it to the clerks' table with page Kevin.

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Mr. Mike Colle: I have a petition on behalf of the unemployed workers in Canada and Ontario.

"Whereas the federal government's employment insurance surplus now stands at" over "\$54 billion; and

"Whereas over 75% of Ontario's unemployed are not eligible for employment insurance because of Ottawa's unfair eligibility rules; and

"Whereas an Ontario worker has to work more weeks to qualify and receives fewer weeks of benefits than other Canadian unemployed workers; and

"Whereas the average Ontario unemployed worker gets \$4,000 less in EI benefits than unemployed workers in other provinces and thus" unemployed are "not qualifying for many retraining programs;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to press the federal government to reform the employment insurance program and to end the discrimination and unfairness towards Ontario's unemployed workers."

I'm in solidarity with Ontario's unemployed workers, and I support this petition.

POVERTY

Mr. Michael Prue: I have a petition that reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas members of Peel Poverty Action Group (PPAG) who are on the Ontario disability support program acknowledge the 2% increases in allowances that will partially offset rising costs of living, we point out that current allowances of about \$1,000 a month do not cover the cost of adequate shelter, nutritious food and personal needs, let alone the additional costs of disability. Further, people with disabilities who are able to work have half their earnings clawed back; we are disappointed that the focus of the government's poverty

reduction strategy is on families, as relatively few people who are on ODSP have children; and most importantly, persons with disabilities in Peel region, as in other areas of the 905, suffer acutely through chronic underfunding of social services in growth areas of Ontario;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"We ask that the pending social assistance review mandate ODSP allowances that enable people with disabilities to obtain shelter, food and personal supports; that those ODSP recipients who are able to work keep a fairer portion of their earnings; that the review significantly restructure the rules and practices governing ODSP to develop a system that supports and encourages people with disabilities rather than diminishes, curtails and punishes them; and, as support services in the region of Peel are severely underfunded because successive governments have failed to develop a formula to take population growth into account, we ask that the review hear from people with disabilities in the 905, particularly the region of Peel."

I'm in agreement so I'm going to sign my name thereto.

CHILD CUSTODY

Mr. Jim Brownell: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"We, the people of Ontario, deserve and have the right to request an amendment to the Children's Law Reform Act to emphasize the importance of children's relationships with their parents and grandparents;

"Whereas subsection 20(2.1) requires parents and others with custody of children to refrain from unreasonably placing obstacles to personal relations between the children and their grandparents; and

"Whereas subsection 24(2) contains a list of matters that a court must consider when determining the best interests of a child. The bill amends that subsection to include a specific reference to the importance of maintaining emotional ties between children and grandparents; and

"Whereas subsection 24(2.1) requires a court that is considering custody of or access to a child to give effect to the principle that a child should have as much contact with each parent and grandparent as is consistent with the best interests of the child; and

"Whereas subsection 24(2.2) requires a court that is considering custody of a child to take into consideration each applicant's willingness to facilitate as much contact between the child and each parent and grandparent as is consistent with the best interests of the child;

"We, the undersigned, hereby petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to amend the Children's Law Reform Act as above to emphasize the importance of children's relationships with their parents and grandparents."

As I agree with this petition, I shall sign it and send it to the clerks' table.

PROPERTY TAXATION

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have a petition from the people of Sudbury.

"Whereas 2009 is a reassessment year in the province of Ontario; and

"Whereas the assessments will be phased in over a four-year period from 2009 to 2012; and

"Whereas the assessed values for current value assessments collected as at January 1, 2008, were obtained during years of high real estate activity in the province of Ontario; and

"Whereas the downturn in the current global economic climate has greatly affected the real estate market, and subsequently, the assessed values in the province of Ontario;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Minister of Finance for the province of Ontario roll back assessed values to the base year of January 1, 2005."

I support this petition and will affix my name to it and send it to the clerks' table with page Mariah.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

CAPPING EXECUTIVE COMPENSATION ACT, 2009

LOI DE 2009 SUR LE PLAFONNEMENT DE LA RÉMUNÉRATION DES CADRES SUPÉRIEURS

Ms. Horwath moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 180, An Act to cap executive compensation /
Projet de loi 180, Loi portant sur le plafonnement de la rémunération des cadres supérieurs.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for her presentation.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I appreciate the opportunity to say a few things about a bill that I tabled in this Legislature not too very long ago. I want to talk about my private member's bill, which in effect caps compensation for corporate executives at the amount of \$400,000. When I say "corporate executives and their compensation," I particularly mean the ones who receive taxpayers' dollars, the companies that are receiving provincial money, provincial help.

I bring this forward now because I believe that now is the time we need to look at what kinds of strings are being attached to the investments, if you will, that are being made on behalf of taxpayers, on behalf of members of our communities across Ontario, to help struggling corporations.

I raise it because we know that many, many families are in fact struggling in today's economy. Families from one end of this province to the other are in incredible circumstances. Many of them are making sacrifices like they have never made before and like nobody would ever have conceived that they would have to make: sacrifices like rolling back wages; sacrifices like loss of jobs; sacrifices like reduction of hours; sacrifices like loss of benefits. All kinds of sacrifices are being made by families and workers in every single community of this province.

We know that we are in a tough time. We know that people are suffering. In fact, we know that Ontario, even before the economic tsunami hit us back in, I guess it was, around October of last year—even before then, we knew that hundreds of thousands of jobs were being lost. In fact, during the year prior, in 2008, 76,000 jobs were lost in manufacturing in Ontario, and over 30,000 construction jobs were also lost.

We know right now that things continue to get worse. Jobs are lost every single month in this province. People are suffering; families are suffering. The unemployment rate is at 8.7% province-wide, but in some communities it's even worse than 8.7%—places like London, 9.5%; Windsor, 13.6%—13.6% unemployment in the city of Windsor.

Last year, the number of EI beneficiaries doubled in many communities. In London, Kitchener, Hamilton and Windsor, the number of people being forced onto employment insurance actually doubled—unbelievable.

1350

Auto worker families particularly know what's been happening. Their communities have been hard hit. Their losses and sacrifices have been very, very obvious, as we hear about them almost every day in the news.

In March, the workers at General Motors agreed to a \$7-an-hour cut in wages and benefits, a move that the head of GM said was difficult. Federal and Ontario governments ordered the company and the union back to the table, though. It wasn't enough; a \$7-an-hour rollback was not enough. They had to go back to the table. The governments wanted deeper cuts. They wanted more sacrifice from their workers. So what happened? They went back to the table, and of course we know that on Monday GM ratified an agreement for a further \$15 in cuts. Meanwhile, workers at Chrysler have agreed to \$19 an hour in cuts.

More workers are taking job sharing to try to cope with the recession, to keep their jobs—and not only in the auto sector; in other sectors as well. Full-time staff at one Rogers Communications unit took a 20% pay cut—20%—just to avoid layoffs at that company. Mitel Networks employees in Ottawa are taking one day of involuntary leave every three weeks to save their jobs.

Needless to say, these are certainly challenging times for Ontarians from one end of the province to the other. Workers and families were not the ones who caused the economic crisis that we're in, but they are absolutely the ones who have been doing their part to make the

sacrifices necessary to get the cuts in place to try to save the companies that they work for.

Sacrifices absolutely need to be made by workers, but the purpose of this bill is to speak to the fact that sacrifices also have to be made by those corporate executives at the top who have been making decisions around how these companies have been faring for quite some time. Some of those executives actually had a hand in the crisis that we see currently unravelling in this province in North America and indeed around the world. So we know that—New Democrats, certainly; we have said very clearly that we're in favour of governments helping some of those companies to make ends meet, helping them to stay solvent during these difficult times. We've watched as taxpayers have come up to the plate and as governments, including ours, have offered to help. But what we want to see, what New Democrats want to see, is not only workers and not only governments, on taxpayers' behalf, making sacrifices and contributing to the solution, but we also want to see top corporate executives play their part as well. That is the purpose of Bill 180.

The issue has been debated hotly. This is not something new, the idea, the issue of capping corporate executive compensation—and again, not just salary, but all those perks, all those benefits, all those stock options, all of those pieces capped to a maximum of \$400,000. That is not something new. In fact, we know that in the United States, President Obama made the same requirements. His cap was at \$500,000, particularly when they were doing the bailouts for the financial sector. So we know that it's not a new idea, a new concept. In fact, in the States there are a couple of different senators who have raised the exact same issue more than once—several of them, in fact—using the same figure as I'm using in this bill today, a \$400,000 cap.

We know what's happening when you look at CEO salaries in comparison to the salaries of regular workers in the workforce. In 1995, the 50 highest paid executives were paid 85 times the pay of an average Canadian. That was in 1995. By 2007, that figure leaped to 398 times. What is that? It's a 12-year period, and it went from 85 times to 398 times? It is sickening to see the growing disparity that's been occurring in our country, in our province. In 2007, the top 100 highest-paid CEOs made an average of \$10.4 million, an increase of 22% from just the previous year. I want to know how many workers in this province got a 22% increase from 2006 to 2007. That's what I want to know. We know that that's not happening; in fact, the opposite is happening, and many of us bemoan the widening gap between the rich and the poor in this province. Well, I would submit to you that it's not a matter of the growing gap between the rich and the poor anymore; it's the growing gap between the rich, these corporate CEOs, and everybody else, and that's what's happening in the province of Ontario.

I want to give you one example of something that came out of my own community, and it was the restructuring of Stelco. What ended up happening in the

restructuring of Stelco after that company went into CCAA protection, which is basically bankruptcy protection here in Canada, was that the corporate CEO was hired during the restructuring after the CCAA. His name was Rodney Mott, and he joined the company about a year before he decided to move on, but his time at the company was interesting. He was able to take \$67 million when he left, mostly from stock options that were provided to him in the company—\$67 million.

The province of Ontario paid \$150 million to help secure the pensions of United Steelworkers members of Stelco back when that bankruptcy protection was under way. Not very long after that, the company switched names, switched ownership, and the CEO of that company walked away with \$67 million. There were no job guarantees there. A couple of jobs were saved temporarily, but we all very well know what has happened to Stelco, US Steel. It's not operating in Hamilton anymore; it's on a shutdown. So: \$150 million of taxpayers' money, a CEO who walked away with \$67 million and a whole bunch of workers out of work in the city of Hamilton. Unfortunately, this is not a new story. Unfortunately, this is not a unique story. This is the same kind of thing that we see over and over again.

A number of my colleagues in the NDP caucus are going to speak to the legislation, and I think it's important that the members in this Legislature think seriously about the opportunity to support this bill. Again, it is not simply something that is a clarion call from New Democrats. Certainly people from all sides of the political spectrum have been calling for similar measures, both here and in other jurisdictions around the world, particularly when we look to the United States.

I would ask members here to seriously consider putting hard caps, real caps, on the executive compensation of CEOs in this province. When the people who work hard for these companies every single day, day in and day out, for decades, are given the pink slip, are given an option of a job with a 20%, 30%, 40% cut in wages and benefits or no job at all, while we're giving their hard-earned tax dollars, as a government, to help out their companies, let's make sure that the corporate executives in those companies are capped so that they're not walking away with the blood and sweat of those workers who have worked for them for decades and decades.

It's a matter of fairness, it's a matter of basic justice and it's a matter of making sure that, when we put these agreements in place where we're helping these companies out, we're not putting in place weak, flimsy strings that might or might not get us some jobs, that might or might not keep these corporate executives on a leash, but we're putting ironclad strings and steel cables in place, steel cables that hold these companies and their corporate executives to account. It's the only fair thing to do for the people of this province whose hard-earned dollars are going into these compensation packages. It's the only fair thing to do for workers who are being devastated in this economic time.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Wayne Arthurs: I'm pleased to be able to rise today and join in the debate in respect to the bill being brought forward, Bill 180, by the member from Hamilton Centre.

I'm going to start with what it is that we're trying to achieve. Is putting a hard cap on all compensation—I'll speak to that briefly in a moment—to, as the member has identified in her words, the top corporate executives in the interest of ensuring that we have a growing, vibrant economy to take us through this storm we're all weathering? Is this going to enhance our capacity to get through the economic storm, or is it going to diminish that capacity?

I'm going to argue, in part, that it would diminish that capacity, not enhance it.

1400

We're probably really speaking about relatively few people in the context of the province of Ontario. It's certainly more than a handful, but few in the context of all those who are in the workplace. It's not directly relevant to those who are receiving or might receive provincial grants or loans.

I want to speak briefly about Canada's top-tier banks, which have among them Canada's top corporate executives. It's our banks that are being lauded internationally for positioning Canada as well as anyone or any country in the world during this economic storm. I would probably argue that in the case of those top corporate bankers—the ones who lead the CIBCs, the Toronto-Dominions, the Banks of Montreal, the Banks of Nova Scotia and the Royal Banks of Canada—the total compensation packages for those few folks well exceed the hard cap that the member is proposing.

Those folks work at substantial salaries. They probably have some pretty good benefit packages. I suspect they also have deferred stock options. They probably have some performance bonuses built in. But these are elite members of the business community who have positioned this country well. I would argue that there are those in a great variety of industries in this country who have done very much the same, who have helped to grow this economy in Ontario and in Canada, and at the same time have helped to ensure—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I need to be able to hear the member for Pickering-Scarborough East, and I would ask all members of the House to allow me to do so.

I return to the member for Pickering-Scarborough East.

Mr. Wayne Arthurs: Thank you, Speaker, for your interjection, and for those from the member opposite, who may not be as enamoured with my comments as I hope others will in understanding that our role here, in part, as I said in my opening comments, is to ensure that what we do enhances the economic climate in this province and doesn't diminish the prospects of an economic recovery and economic growth in the country.

The folks we may be talking about—some of these top corporate executives—are folks who have many years of academic study: master's in business administration, maybe Ph.D.s in a variety of areas. They're chartered accountants by trade; they have worked in a number of corporate entities; maybe they have moved both nationally and internationally; they have acquired skills south of the border or in Europe; they have returned to Canada so that they can bring those skills back here—those economic and financial skills, those skills in running business—that will continue to make us successful.

There is the argument being made that where the government has felt the need to engage itself in business through support mechanisms, we should target those top corporate executives for hard-capping all of their packages at a particular number that has been drawn from somewhere, I'm not quite sure where, unless they're using a south-of-the-border number and discounting it at 25% because of the American dollar. I don't know exactly where those numbers are coming from.

The reality for me, in part, is that we need to ensure that we encourage those with the skill sets to move through those corporations, to create the type of work environment to build those companies in a very positive way. We're not going to get that if we don't provide the opportunity for those corporations to bring those skill sets to their executive offices. We're not going to do that if we, in effect, preclude them from getting people with international experience to come to Canada to assist those companies who need them most. We're not going to get it to support those very dollars that we are guaranteeing, either through grants or principally through loans to companies. We're not going to ensure the viability of those loans to be paid back to this province if we don't support those companies with the best possible top executives, particularly at the time of greatest need. It is the time of greatest need, where we need the best executives possible—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I'm sorry to interrupt you again. We're all very enthusiastic and excited about this debate, but I would ask all members of this House to please refrain from heckling the member for Pickering-Scarborough East.

I again return to the member for Pickering-Scarborough East.

Mr. Wayne Arthurs: I admit I will be sharing my time, obviously, with the other speakers, including those within our caucus who will be speaking to it in whatever fashion. But as I started off by saying, I don't support the legislation proposed. The mover talked about top corporate executives. We need to ensure that those top corporate executives are the best in the world, particularly if we are going to invest in those companies. We want to ensure we're getting the best-quality people. Sometimes that does cost, and hard caps don't help us achieve that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: I want to warn the excitable party to my left that if the Liberals aren't going to support this bill, can you imagine what I'm going to say?

It's an interesting concept and it's one that perhaps comes to light more during economic downturns, when corporations try to take action to garner some support for their business and their businesses. However, I think, in a way, we're comparing apples and oranges. We're not making the same comparison when we talk about those people on the floor, the labour in a factory, and those people who are managing that company. The compensation rates that they have between those two groups of people have different criteria as to how their compensation programs take place. Of course, if you're comparing apples to apples, which is usually a pleasant thing to do, or apples to oranges, you obviously want to select the apples as opposed to the oranges.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: There are a lot of Republican voters who would support our motion.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Yes. The southern Republicans, of course, would go with the oranges, I'm sure.

However, the compensation package of an employee of a company, of course, is quite often based on their productivity. If you look at someone who is on the floor of a plant, their productivity may increase in small increments based on the management of the company and how that management supports that worker. The compensation for a chief executive officer, for instance, is based on far different circumstances. It's based on their ability to move the entire company. It's based on their ability to add value to the entire company, and sometimes that requires very high wages.

Now, I will admit that I have looked at some of the compensation packages that have been given over the last 15 years and I wondered why a reasonable board of directors would ever authorize a compensation package for chief executives that will amount to that amount of money, because no one could ever increase the value of that company that much. One company that seemed to fall into that category time and time again was Nortel, which was famous for that. Actually, I think those compensation packages went significantly a long way to bringing that company to its knees, where it is today.

However, we're getting a ways away from the issue of this bill, and the issue of this bill is about capping the wages of all the executives of companies. Although, as I've said, there are times when I've wondered why a corporation would get into that situation, I do think that if you cap them all at a figure of \$400,000—I think that's the one that the member has chosen—that might be far too much in some circumstances. It may be far too little in other circumstances.

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Ontario is a huge and diverse province, and I have great concern in any facet of the management of this province when you can wave a wand and say that Ontario is all the same. From Cornwall to Kenora, from Leamington to Moosonee, Ontario is not all the same. It's extremely diverse, and if we wave a wand and say that it

is all the same, we are taking the first step towards making a very large mistake.

I would have liked to have seen something in this bill that would allow that if a government were to make a deal with a company—and that's basically what they're doing, in compensating a company or handing out a grant—there was a clause in there that a clawback of excess wages could be inserted. I would like to have seen that in this bill, particularly if the company is sold or shut down at the end of the arrangements. That would have given me some confidence that taxpayers' money would be protected because, in the long run, I think what has to happen—what we're all talking about is protecting some taxpayers' money, in the case where we've seen this government hand out money to General Motors in the Beacon project. What happened? General Motors' executives did get bonuses and General Motors' employees did get laid off, and taxpayers' money did go to assist that process.

I think that the terms and conditions of that arrangement that was made with General Motors perhaps didn't have nearly enough detail involved in it, and I think the government is learning as it goes. Unfortunately, it's learning with Ontario taxpayers' dollars.

Another company the government got into bed with was the Ford Motor Co., which is doing very nicely in Ontario, thank you very much. They're not lined up for government grants. But in the 2006-07 era, Ford did receive a large grant from the province of Ontario, and on the eve of hiring 500 employees who were to start work on Monday—on Friday, the Ford Motor Co. announced that that shift would not start. That was a disaster for those 500 people. They had left jobs or they had left a community. They had moved. They had out-of-pocket expenses and then they weren't hired at the end, and I don't believe that Ford ever paid back any of the money they got from the Ontario government. I would stand corrected if someone can tell me they did, but I don't believe they did, and I think that's wrong. That's terribly wrong. The contract that was signed between the government of Ontario and Ford Motor Co. wasn't nearly tight enough—not by a long shot was it nearly tight enough.

Chrysler also had some money in those days, and again, they laid off workers. They took the money of the taxpayers of Ontario and laid off workers, and although they have survived, they have done so at huge, huge human expense to their workforce and to the people of Ontario in the way of grants.

I think that all governments should take extra, particular care when they are negotiating these huge contracts in handing out huge amounts of Ontario tax dollars to these companies and not having a handle on how the company operates or what it does with the money they get from the government.

In not knowing how to do that from a government point of view, that is one of the few times—I'm sure the government will be interested in this—that I would recognize that a consultant might be money extremely well spent by the government—if they were to hire a

consultant and find out how they can accomplish what they want to accomplish without wasting taxpayers' dollars, on the other hand, by watching the company shrink. Perhaps "sellout" is what happened in the Stelco situation, with US Steel. No sooner had they got the government money than they sold out to US Steel. US Steel came along and shut down the company, and Ontario taxpayers' dollars went somewhere up in the ether and we're left without jobs in Ontario. And I think the chief executive of Stelco and US Steel, whatever company he was working for—I think the chief executive did get a huge bonus.

I think those kinds of things could be avoided if the government recognized that they don't have any expertise in tying up a corporation or a company, when they're dealing with handing out taxpayers' precious dollars. I think they could go a long way toward being a lot more careful with someone else's money.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Paul Miller: Before I get into my notes here, I'd just like to bring to the attention of the official opposition and the government that I happened to be working at that place when it got taken over. The first thing out of Mr. Mott's mouth was, "We'd like the union to take a \$3- to \$4-an-hour cut in concessions, and we'd also like to go into their benefits."

I'll tell you what happened. If Bill 180 had been on the books when US Steel took over Stelco, we might have had a much fairer outcome. I'll quote from the Hamilton Spectator about Rodney Mott, the wealthy takeover artist brought in by US Steel to seal the demise of our company, Stelco:

"Mott set about restructuring Stelco's operations and reducing the workforce from more than 5,000 workers to 3,600 through buyout and retirement incentives.

"He also immediately bought one million Stelco shares at \$5.50 each, for a total investment of \$5.5 million. He will cash those shares in November for ... \$33 million.

"Mott also holds 1,044,000 options to buy shares at the same price of \$5.50 each. Those options, when exercised, will provide another \$34.45 million in profits to the turnaround man. That's on top of Mott's regular salary and bonuses totalling more than \$500,000." Well, that's very interesting.

It was and still is a disgrace that the provincial government forked over \$150 million to the Stelco pension to sweeten the deal for this big takeover by the Americans. Stelco retirees are worrying from year to year about their meagre pensions, yet this fancy man from the States walks away with excessive salaries and gross personal profits on the shares of a company that provided livelihoods for many of my neighbours and friends in Hamilton.

Now that same company is taking its materials off the ground from Hamilton, shipping them back to the States and restarting blast furnaces down there—and I won't be surprised if Mr. Mott is involved in that—while our

furnaces sit cold, our workers are on the street and their EI is running out. Nice deal.

The government should not allow these things to happen in our province. We need legislation to protect the public purse from successive executives who bleed away our hard-earned tax dollars with these high-income sweetheart deals.

Let's not forget how many times we've uncovered inappropriate spending, administrative investment and structural nightmares caused by the actions of these overpaid fat cats. And you know that white-collar crime is running rampant in North America while governments sit around and do nothing about it.

It's time to take back control of Ontario's public dollars and cap the executive salaries of any organization receiving even one cent from the government, directly or through any of its agencies, grants, loans or any other form of compensation or investment. I'd even like to include these overpaid consultants hired by any government office, agency or recipient of government funding of any sort. And I'd make darned sure that any consultant hired by this government is a resident of Ontario, and that we "buy Ontario" at all levels.

In closing, I can only tell you, from a layman's perspective, I spent over 30 years in that plant. I worked, I brought up my family, I contributed to the tax base and I helped my community. These guys walk in here from Virginia and walk away with \$64 million. It's shameful, disgraceful, and government should wake up.

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The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I'm pleased and honoured to stand up in my place and participate in the debate on the private member's bill, An Act to cap executive compensation.

Interjection.

Mr. Khalil Ramal: Thank you, Mr. Marchese.

It's important for all of us to talk about a very important issue: protecting the workers and the taxpayers in this province. I know it's a very emotional issue for many people across this province, especially for the workers who've lost their jobs and for towns that have lost their main employers. I know it's an important issue and I know we can talk about it in this place. I know the member from Hamilton Centre wants to bring it forward and play with the emotions of Ontarians, play with the emotions of the workers—because we know that whether we pass this bill or don't pass this bill, it's not going to make any difference.

I'll tell you why it can't make any difference: Most of the companies that open in the province of Ontario are international companies that come from different parts of the globe. They come to the province of Ontario and give us the opportunity to have a lot of workers working in their companies and their factories. If we pass this bill or don't pass it, it's not going to make a difference, because it only plays on the emotions of the people of this province.

We witness so many different companies coming from abroad to Ontario. I'll give you an example. A company came to London, Ontario, called Hanwha, and it opened its doors and also got supported by a loan from our government—a \$10-million loan for 10 years. As a result of that loan, they were able to open their doors. It's very important. They are going to hire more than 100 skilled workers from the city of London. Without that support, I think that company wouldn't have been able to open its doors this month.

Another company called the Original Cakerie came from British Columbia and also got supported by our government, through a loan to give them the support to open in the city of London. Without our government support, they wouldn't have been able to open in London.

We have to distinguish between a loan and a grant. We give a successful company a loan. We give that to companies that are able to expand their operations, that are able to employ more people and that are able to produce more products for the province of Ontario. We're assisting them to offer more expansion and offer more people work in the province of Ontario.

If you want to cap the salaries, we cannot because some of them are, as I mentioned, international companies which we have no jurisdiction over. It would be nice if we could have some kind of mechanism to cap some companies that are supported 100% by taxpayers' money or by a grant. Maybe it's good. Maybe it's correct. But when we give them a loan, it's a totally different story. That's why it's important for all of us to keep that prosperity in the province of Ontario. To be able to protect and also attract many companies to come to this province, we have to create a good atmosphere, good rules and regulations, to be able to open our doors for many different companies and big corporations to come to this province and open up and employ the great people of Ontario.

That's why I listened to the honourable member from Hamilton Centre talking about many different stories, comparing Ontario companies to United States companies. We have to remember that Obama's bill only talks about companies that depend 100%—or a big percentage of its operations—on United States taxpayers' dollars. But we deal here in the province of Ontario with successful companies that offer innovative, prosperous ideas to employ the people of Ontario.

I would love to support this bill, but it's not going to make any difference, as I mentioned. How can we control a company that comes from Germany, Italy, the United States, Mexico, or from any part of the globe? We don't have the head office here in Ontario.

As the member from Hamilton East-Stoney Creek mentioned, we shouldn't allow an executive to collect a big amount of money if he does not live in the province of Ontario, if he does not have a house in the province of Ontario. I think it will be an appropriate approach to support our economy, an appropriate approach to support our government, and an appropriate approach to support our workers in this province who want to work, who

want to find a job for themselves and for their families in this great province of Ontario—to create more taxes for the people of Ontario in order to support our agenda for public education, public health care and infrastructure, and also to support the vulnerable people among us.

That's why I'm not supporting that bill, because it does not offer a logical approach to our economic crisis. But the most important thing is that we have to work with those corporations and with those companies to create jobs for the people of Ontario, to protect our economy and to protect our tax base.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Peter Shurman: I think I have two minutes, and I have a couple of comments to make on this bill. I come from a background in the private sector and I can remember the halcyon days 22 years ago when I made significantly more money in a year than I make as an MPP today in 2009. The reason I would like to think I was paid that way was that a board of directors somewhere thought that I brought something unique to the company that they wanted me to manage and I made them a significant multiple of what I was being paid.

I think the same is true if you look at entertainment people, when you look at television, and people are making \$10 million and \$20 million and \$30 million a year because of the advertising revenue that they attract. Or sports figures: I remember the last year that the Jays won the World Series, and Joe Carter was making something like—I remember calculating it—\$100,000 per home run. So you pay for uniqueness. Even when you look at companies that were once private enterprise but now have been adulterated because there's a government loan or government equity investment involved, you have executives who were treated on that basis and who now, in the face of a bill like the member's or the scrutiny of the government or the scrutiny of the population, have to review and decide whether or not they can maintain huge bonus structures and huge salaries, given that the performance of the company is negative.

I must admit, notwithstanding the fact that I am on one side of the political spectrum and the member who has brought forward this bill is on the other, that I have some feeling for what you're trying to put forward. In terms of giving government the opportunity to invest in companies or offer loan guarantees, there's one sure way to create a small business, and that's to start a large one and give it to a government to run—and, I might say, a government of any stripe.

So you have to differentiate between loans and equity, whether the government is going to take a position going forward on the long term or the short term. I've heard members argue that it would be hard to differentiate when it comes to companies that are external to Ontario. That's not true, because Ontario controls its own companies.

I can't tell you whether I'll vote for or against this, but I have some sympathy for it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Michael Prue: Just because I can't help resist, I would invite my honourable friend from Thornhill to look at the Potash Corp. of Saskatchewan, which is wholly government-owned and which probably makes the largest profit of any company in this country. Just to let you know, that's government-run.

I think what some of the members are missing here, what you're losing here, is that this bill is seeking to limit and cap compensation for those who are accepting government money. It's not for all the corporations in Canada. It's not for the profitable ones. It's not even for the ones that are losing money but don't want to take government grants and loans. It's for those that are coming on bended knee to us and saying, "Give us public money. We need public money. We can't exist without public money. We're going to go out without public money." All we're saying, and all this bill is saying, is that if they come and they want the taxpayers' dime, then this government and every government should limit the compensation of its chief executives. They don't have to take the money and we won't limit them. But when they are coming and saying, "I want \$1 million or \$5 million or \$5 billion," then there have to be some rules. And one of the rules is that the public ought not to be spending their money on excessive compensation.

Those of you who get Maclean's magazine—and I just got the May 11 issue; I had an opportunity to read it—and you look inside the compensation of six executives here in Ontario: You have to ask yourself, is this fair? Should the public, if they come for money, be giving money to people like this? They highlighted six individuals.

The first one was Michael Sabia of BCE. He took over BCE in 2002. Its stock was struggling in the mid-\$20 range. He was hired to fix things. But when his planned privatization fell apart, the stock plunged right back down to where it was when he took over. His pension plan: \$21 million.

Robert Prichard—you all remember him from Torstar, the Toronto Star, the big paper here in Toronto? He's now riding the GO train. How did he earn his money during his tenure? Torstar's stock fell by two thirds, and the company recently announced that its dividend will be slashed in half. Just after a large quarterly loss and writedown were announced, it was revealed that Prichard would be leaving with \$9.6 million.

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You've got Tom Parkinson—we all remember him from Hydro One. Parkinson left after scathing criticism of billing practices by Ontario's Auditor General, but he still managed to pocket \$4.8 million on his way out, including severance of \$3.3 million and \$1.5 million in salary and other payments.

Not be outdone, of course, we have those people in the United States who have ripped off the system royally. A couple of American examples: Robert Nardelli of Home Depot had a really good contract. His contract promised that he would get 90% of his pay no matter how poorly the company did. He resigned in 2007 after years of

slowing profits and still got one of the biggest packages ever awarded: US\$210 million.

You've got Rick Wagoner—we know that General Motors is looking for money here. How did he do? "On March 7, when Wagoner was forced out as GM's CEO after eight years on the job by the Obama administration, he left it teetering in life support where it remains today, filed for bankruptcy. That didn't stop him from driving off into the sunset with a pension package worth \$23 million."

The worst one of all, of course—I have saved the best till last, and so did Maclean's—was Stanley O'Neal, from Merrill Lynch. How did he earn his money? "Under O'Neal's leadership, Merrill delved deep into sub-prime mortgages. When the market crashed and Merrill reported a quarterly loss of \$2.2 billion, he left with \$161.5 million in stock options and retirement options."

What we're saying is that if the shareholders and the people in the executive want to pay these guys, and they can, pay them. If they want them to ride off with this, then that's their problem and the problem of the shareholders who put up with it. But if you want government funds, if you come to the Ontario government and say, "Give us money; we're struggling; we need to stay solvent," then I think we have an obligation to say, "You can't be earning that kind of money." Surely to God, if the Premier of this province makes \$200,000 a year on a \$100-billion enterprise, which is the government of this province, then I think \$400,000, or double that—

Mr. Peter Shurman: He does a bad job.

Mr. Michael Prue: Well, he may or may not—whatever job you want to say he does. Surely to God we can cap it at \$400,000 too. We have an obligation, when public money is there, to make sure that is done.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

M^{me} France Gélinas: As my colleague just said, Bill 180 is really focused on limiting executive pay for corporations that are not profitable, for corporations that are coming to the government for bailout money, that are coming to the taxpayers for their money. This is what this bill is all about.

CEO pay statistics provide a glimpse into the rising income inequality in Ontario and in Canada. Did you know that average real wages have stalled since 1979? That means that for the average Ontarian toiling every day with a full-time job, pay has not gone up. Meanwhile, the income share of Canada's top 5% rose by 20% and the income share of the top 1% rose by 44% in real dollar value. So, while the vast majority of Ontarians' salaries didn't move, the people at the top kept getting richer.

In the last 20 years, the top 10% families went from making 31 times the earnings of the poorest 10% to making 82 times the earnings of the 10% poorest families. In the last 10 years alone, the average household with children put in 200 hours a week more work time on the job just to stay alive. Bill 180 won't fix the income and inequality crisis, but along with other initiatives on

executive pay, such as the say on pay, it would help the conversation get started.

A society where the rich get richer while the poor get poorer, all on the taxpayers' money, is called income inequality. It is a huge determinant of health. A society which sees a growing gap in income inequality will also see social unrest. You will see more violence on the streets. You will see more hardship for your citizens because the gap between the rich and the poor is getting wider in Ontario.

We have an opportunity to do something about this. All of the unprofitable corporations that are coming to the Ontario government wanting taxpayers' money to stay afloat—if they want that money and they need it to stay afloat, then the government of Ontario is in a position to say, "We will help you if it's to the good of the people of Ontario, but you will have to cap your executive salaries at \$400,000." Before, all of the other profitable corporations could do whatever they want, but if you come for money, the money comes with strings attached, including a cap.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I believe that concludes the time that each party has to speak to this particular ballot item, but the member for Hamilton Centre.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I want to say, first of all, that I appreciate the level of debate that has occurred on this issue, but I have to say I'm a bit disappointed. We know what's happening out there. We see the suffering that workers are facing every single day, day in and day out. We see pensioners who are worried about whether they are going to be able to have a pension or not, whether the pension they have now is going to still be there for them next week or the week after that. We see families having to eat into savings that they put away for the post-secondary education of their children because they can't make ends meet anymore, because their job isn't there for them or they've taken significant rollbacks. This is not the way for a society to move forward, when the very top executives are making scads and scads of dollars, and the rest of us are barely holding on by our fingernails. That's bad enough, but to have that situation occur when government dollars, when taxpayers' dollars are being given to these companies to help them survive, the very, very least that we need to do with those grants and loans is to make sure that those corporate executives are feeling the same kind of pain that regular people in the province of Ontario are feeling. That is what Bill 180 is all about.

Some of the members talked about how perhaps \$400,000 is too much; perhaps it's too little. I don't really want to put the details in place today. We could get this bill to committee; we could have the conversation about what the caps should be. Perhaps it shouldn't even be a figure. Perhaps it should be a percentage of the profits that the company makes, for example, or an average wage of the workers in the company. There are ways of finding the cap, but the bottom line is that it is unacceptable that taxpayers' dollars go to these companies while the workers get the shaft.

MUNICIPAL RESIDENTIAL
AND COMMERCIAL
SURGE PROTECTOR ACT, 2009
LOI DE 2009
SUR L'INSTALLATION
DE PARASURTENSEURS
RÉSIDENTIELS ET COMMERCIAUX
DANS LES MUNICIPALITÉS

Mr. Lalonde moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 176, An Act to amend the Building Code Act, 1992, the City of Toronto Act, 2006 and the Municipal Act, 2001 with respect to surge protectors in new residential and commercial buildings / Projet de loi 176, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1992 sur le code du bâtiment, la Loi de 2006 sur la cité de Toronto et la Loi de 2001 sur les municipalités à l'égard de l'installation de parasurtenseurs dans les nouveaux immeubles d'habitation et les nouveaux immeubles commerciaux.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for his presentation.

M. Jean-Marc Lalonde: C'est avec plaisir que je présente en deuxième lecture le projet de loi 176. Tous les Ontariens et Ontariennes bénéficieront de ce projet de loi, qui prévient la nécessité de recours légaux ainsi que les pertes économiques encourues lors du rétablissement de pannes de courant.

1440

These amendments would authorize municipalities to pass bylaws requiring the installation of surge protectors in new residential and commercial buildings. I want to make it clear: It is a permissive bill. It is not forcing anything on municipalities. As a long-time politician, un politicien doit toujours être à l'écoute de ses commettants et commettantes.

I have learned that after 40 years in politics, in public life, a good politician must always pay attention to the needs and concerns of his constituents. Well, this is exactly what I'm doing today. I have listened.

On March 17 of this year I attended a public meeting on power outages organized by my colleague the member for Ottawa—Orléans, Phil McNeely. Many Hydro One customers from Orléans, Cumberland and Navan attended the meeting. Also in attendance were two representatives from Hydro One: Laura Cooke and Len McMillan, director of the power lines operation. Since 2008, almost 40,000 Cumberland township residents have experienced many severe power outages. In many cases, these outages have caused considerable damages and expenses. For example, after an outage on December 23, 2008, two days before Christmas, 86 claims were submitted to Hydro One for furnace repairs, electrical appliance damage, faulty electric garage doors, burned-out TVs and many others. Today, none of the 86 claims have been awarded; that is to say that no money was awarded either through Hydro One or the insurance companies.

When I spoke with State Farm Insurance, they explained to me their policy: If they deem the claim justifiable they will only cover some specific appliances, but the deductible will apply, and at times the deductible goes as high as \$1,000, often higher than the price of repairing the damages. Richard Lalonde, who is not my brother but a resident of Queenswood Heights, a constituent of Ottawa—Orléans riding, spent over \$800 on furnace repairs after the December 23 outage. At the March 17 meeting, Richard Lalonde said, "You guys"—MPPs Lalonde and McNeely—"need to go back to the Ontario Legislature and act on our behalf." This is exactly what I'm doing today.

The manager of risk management and insurance for Hydro One reports that they receive between 1,500 and 2,300 damage claims per year. Rarely, if ever, do they get reimbursement.

A power surge occurs when an electrical charge is increased to up to 1,000 volts at some point in the distribution lines and hits a component designed for 120 to 240 volts, the regular voltage in residential homes. A less common but more damaging cause of power surges is lightning. When lightning strikes near a power line, the electrical energy can boost electrical pressure by millions of volts, causing an extremely large power surge. This can damage delicate parts found in all electronic devices, including home appliances, computers, televisions, furnaces and garage door openers, just to name a few. A power surge can enter your home through power lines, telephone lines and cable lines. Power surges can also be caused by faulty wiring, broken power lines, faulty utility company equipment and extreme cold weather.

What is a surge protector? Surge protectors block the peaks by diverting excess voltage to a home's electrical ground connection. Surge protectors absorb the excess electrical energy, slowly letting it dissipate until it is grounded. These devices protect electrical equipment from voltage spikes. They could be installed on the electrical panel. The size of the device is roughly 24 by 10 by 8 centimetres, and the cost could vary between \$100 and \$500, depending on the device you choose.

I've received support from all over Canada. This is the first time this was ever brought to a Legislature. In BC, in Manitoba, everybody is complaining, but nobody has ever paid attention to this problem that we have. I have received support for this bill from a number of constituents, local municipal hydro commissions and local distribution companies.

Selon l'administrateur en chef de Hawkesbury Hydro, Michel Poulin, ce projet de loi semble simple et précis. « Le parasurtenseur »—that is the French word for "surge protector"—« va effectivement protéger le panneau électrique du client et par le fait même éviter des réclamations ».

Hydro One has said, "It is safe to assume that surge protection in every newly constructed dwelling or commercial building ... could help to prevent damage to household appliances and other electrical equipment, usually beyond the control of Hydro One or the local distribution company."

Selon René Beaulne, conseiller municipal dans la municipalité d'Alfred et directeur général d'Hydro 2000, « Ceci sera bon pour les usagers, surtout les gens qui habitent dans les appartements. Ça serait moins dangereux et protégerait leurs équipements. »

What are other jurisdictions doing? This is cutting edge. As I said, no other jurisdiction in North America has a bylaw requiring the installation of surge protectors in new residential or commercial buildings.

Given the extent of the problem, many local distribution companies advise consumers that they should invest in surge protectors. As I said, a surge protector only costs between \$100 and \$500; that is all. The damage that this causes—as you will see in the Mr. Lalonde case, it cost \$800 just to have his furnace repaired. Really, if he goes to his private insurance company—he had a deductible of \$500. Immediately it didn't pay, and also his insurance company had to investigate, so the person, two days before Christmas, was out of pocket \$800.

This problem is not exclusive to Ontario. A blackout occurred on January 5, 2009, in Silverdale-Stave Falls, British Columbia. Many people were left without power for a full day. The permanent and expensive consequence came from the power coming back on, creating a surge and destroying electrical appliances, televisions, computers and even electrical consumption meters. BC Hydro would not compensate their customers.

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Manitoba Hydro is recommending that consumers have their own surge protection devices installed for the protection of their personal electrical equipment. Where can we buy the surge protectors? There is no manufacturer in Ontario, but there are distributors. Here in Mississauga there's one. But as far as I know, while there are a number of distributors in Ontario, surge protectors for residential and commercial buildings are entirely manufactured in the US.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Peter Shurman: I note this bill with interest, because I think that, on the basis of the value of surge protectors, I could support the bill.

Where I get off track is when the member says something like, "No other jurisdiction in North America has a bylaw like this." I suppose he says it on the basis that he thinks that this bill is therefore somewhat groundbreaking. It is, but not in a way that I can agree with. There's a reason why no other jurisdiction in North America has a bylaw like this. It's because this is one of those things that we should consider optional, in my opinion.

I have a bit of personal experience—very recent, as a matter of fact, in the last month, and it makes a fool of me but I'll tell it anyway, because I think it is somewhat revealing.

I lost a computer about three, four weeks ago at home because I don't have a surge protector in the circuit. I own a surge protector, but I didn't bother plugging it in because it has a great big battery in it, because it also acts

as an uninterrupted power supply and the battery was dead. I plugged the computer in the wall. Poof—no more computer.

That, as the member correctly points out, is the value of having surge protectors in, and to me, right now, \$1 to \$500 would be a very small price to pay to have saved that particular computer. It's going to cost me that much to repair the power supply, if indeed it is the only the power supply that has been blown.

I look at it on the basis of it being a good thing, but I also look at it on the basis of what in Latin is called "caveat emptor." I knew, before I plugged that computer in the wall, that I was taking a chance by having what is commonly referred to as "dirty power" coming out of the outlets in my home. As I look around the room, as I look at any group, I can tell you that you all have dirty power coming out of the outlets in your home, because that's what the power company supplies.

In fact, it begs the question, if we were talking about legislation, especially in the context of these days of green energy, whether that be in an act or otherwise, we should probably be looking at giant surge protectors that protect neighbourhoods, apartment buildings or whatever the case may be, rather than looking—if we were going to impose something, let's talk about the power company supplying something that is clean power as opposed to dirty power. But we don't do that.

The point is that these are great devices. They actually do what the member says they do: They smooth out the power and they keep us protected from losing computers and other similar devices, as I did a couple of weeks back.

More importantly, people don't realize that their homes, in these times, are loaded with electronic devices that, while they don't look like computers, are to all intents and purposes the same. We're talking about big-screen televisions, microwave ovens and all kinds of things that have microprocessors installed in them, that would benefit from surge protectors. In my own case, having purchased a house recently in Niagara-on-the-Lake and looking at taking occupancy of it in the next couple of years and putting a lot of electronic equipment in it, I'll probably retrofit it.

I think that that is the place where we best should leave the concept of surge protection, because what we're doing, when we mandate yet another thing, is opening the door to a domino effect.

I'll provide an example. This bill does not force anyone to install a surge protector in their home. What it does is license or authorize municipalities, if they should so choose, to pass bylaws that then put surge protectors in the mix when it comes to issuing a building permit. All I can think of is the mayor of the city of Toronto going, "Aha, another thing that I can tax: \$100 to \$500 for a surge protector, and when we issue the building permit we'll get another \$500 called a surge protector tax." I have my tongue in my cheek when I say that, but I can almost move it away because I can see it happening.

What I would prefer, in order of my preferences, is the power companies cleaning up their power and not

providing so-called dirty, spiky power, on the basis that we know, in these times, that most people have houses loaded with equipment that has microprocessors in at the root, which is therefore subject to disappearance in a moment during a lightning storm, or just during a time where there's a big draw or a big release of power, say, in the middle of summer when air conditioners are being used; and if not that, then at least leaving this optional.

Surge protectors—great idea. Taking care of our equipment—great idea. Saving money—great idea. Authorizing cities to impose this is yet another Big Brother approach that I can't agree with.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Michael Prue: I too have a story to tell, and that story happened in my house. There is a large electrical transformer on the post on my next-door neighbour's property, and it blew out. It wasn't the blowing out of the post that caused me any immediate problems; it was when the repair company came, repaired it and turned the power on. Not only did I lose my VCRs and the computer, but all of my neighbours along the street, on both sides, lost almost every single piece of their electrical equipment.

It wasn't because we didn't have surge protection; we all had it. But we didn't have the big one that's in the house, because the houses were built in the 1950s. We all had the little ones hooked up to the computers and the individual pieces, but that wasn't strong enough, so that it quite literally destroyed most of the electronic equipment, the televisions, the VCRs, the computers that all of us owned.

It seemed to me at that point that something ought to be done about that. We did find out about getting an all-house surge protector, and I believe we did get one. We also had to deal extensively, for a couple of weeks, with Toronto Hydro, because they are the ones, in resetting the transformer, who caused the problem. The insurance companies were all involved, and everybody was all involved.

It seems to me that if you can protect a street or a community, as my friend from Thornhill has suggested, that's a good idea. But if you can't go that far, and if perhaps that's a little bit difficult at the outset, then it should at least be possible, when you are building new homes, to put in that kind of protection or to give some kind of emphasis or monies or opportunity to people to upgrade the electrical systems in older homes. After all, if you live in the city of Toronto, as I do, most of the homes are of much older vintage. There are not too many new ones around, and quite frankly, except for infill housing, when an older home is demolished and a new one put in, there are very few new homes in the communities and neighbourhoods that I represent.

I did a little bit of research, in terms of Mr. Lalonde's bill, and it was quite clear: Every home should have a whole-house surge protector. That costs the magnificent sum not only of about a hundred to a couple of hundred dollars to put it in, but it uses three cents of electricity per

month. I think it's money well spent. Once you put it in, it costs three cents of electricity per month to protect you and your family and all your valuables, especially electronic valuables, against not only surges coming off the wires but also lightning strikes.

There is also, of course, the point-of-use surge protector, which most of us buy, in terms of our televisions and computers. You will recognize those; they're usually on a bar and you hook up your computer equipment to it. It works individually but not for massive surges, only for smaller ones.

You will see the problems in this technological society that that can cause to people, especially around their computer systems: the erasure of data, the damage to the hardware, the damage to printers. Quite frankly, most of the equipment, although expensive, is of such a nature that it is not designed to be repaired; it's designed to be replaced. So, quite often, what happens when it blows out is that it ends up in the trash heap. It ends up in a landfill somewhere, which is a shame, because that too is not environmentally very sound. It need not have happened. It probably had many, many years of useful life, the computers, VCR equipment and CD equipment that I lost.

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The surge equipment also allows ordinary equipment to last longer in terms of wearing out. Because it doesn't have peaks and valleys, the equipment tends to last longer. There is less energy loss and less heat buildup, which is far more energy-efficient in terms of how we're all trying to save on electricity in this province.

Mr. Speaker, I've also got a little piece of information here called Today's Technology and You, and it provided some information to me—Madam Speaker, I'm sorry; I didn't see that we had switched—of which I was not aware. It says, "The switching on and off of nearby or distant neighbours' clothes washers, furnace blowers or air conditioners can send surges through the electric lines into your home." I was unaware that my neighbour's furnace blower, air conditioner or clothes washer could send a surge into my home.

When I found out that that is entirely and eminently possible, then I thought it made much more sense. It's not the surge that are you putting on, it's not the motor going on in my house, the motor going on in the furnace, but it might be my next door neighbour's motor or him cutting the grass with his electric lawn mower or the thousand things that we have electrically in our homes.

It went on to say, "A large compressor motor at a nearby grocery store and electric farm equipment are other common sources of strong voltage surges." This, too, surprised me. Although I don't have any farms in Beaches-East York or in close proximity to Beaches-East York, there are many grocery stores and factory applications where there is a lot of electrical equipment, and it's quite conceivable that in the block next to mine, where there are some factories, that could be a result as well.

So, having taken these things into account and having listened to the member from Glengarry-Prescott—

Russell's able submission, really over the last couple of days—at first, I thought, “Why do we need this bill?” But on reflection and upon some study, it seems to me an eminently good idea.

The only sadness I have is that it is not being made mandatory. Perhaps I come from a different place than my Conservative friends. It seems that it is such a good idea, such a doable idea, that it is something that should be built into new homes. I know that if I was going out to buy a new home and they said, “This home costs \$450,000”—or the equivalent—“but it's going to cost you an extra \$100 because we put surge protection into it and you'll never have to worry about lightning strikes and you'll never have to worry about losing your equipment, your electricity bills will go down, and it's going to help to save the environment,” I would think that was probably about the best \$100 I could possibly spend.

So not just the option to leave it up to municipalities, but it's such a good idea that I hope when this goes to committee—and I will be voting for it—the member considers making it mandatory that new homes throughout the province of Ontario and any retrofitted homes, when people are redoing the electrical systems, should have the equivalent of \$100 surge protection, all-house protection, put in. If it's a little more than \$100 in some cases, I understand that too. But it is money well spent. It's money well spent for all of us, not just the people who live in those homes, not just the people who work in the factories, the commercial application, but all of us who live in proximity to them. Because we are social beings and because we all have neighbours and because what happens in the neighbours' homes can directly affect our own, we ought to be looking at this.

So I commend the member, and I will be voting for this, but when and if it goes to committee—and I trust that it will, that it is his desire to send it to committee—I hope that we take a very strong look at making it an even better bill than was presented here today.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Leeanna Pendergast): Further debate?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I wanted to speak to this legislation; I think it's a very good idea.

But first, I want to just make a couple of comments about the member for Glengarry–Prescott–Russell and private members' business. I think as someone mentioned and as the member himself mentioned, he had been in municipal politics for a number of years, serving as a mayor of the town of Rockland for 15 years. He has been an outspoken advocate for francophone rights in Ontario, and in fact, I had the pleasure—

Applause.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Absolutely. I had the pleasure of meeting some high school students from French-language schools across Ontario who were participating in the third annual *Parlement jeunesse francophone de l'Ontario*, which is led by the member from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell. He brings these students to the Legislature, and they have the opportunity to partake

in what goes on here and, in fact, to experience being legislators themselves.

He's also a passionate hockey advocate, and I believe he's the only member of the Legislature who has a hockey arena named after him. I could stand to be corrected, but I believe he's the only member in that situation.

But most importantly, and vis-à-vis private members' business, he is a responsive member. He has got practical experience that allows him to respond to and understand what's going on in communities around the province. As you heard him speak, he talked about the notion for this legislation coming from a meeting in his own community. It's that kind of issue that gets raised in private members' business, and it's very, very important. I suspect that down the road, as the member for Beaches–East York referenced, this is probably something that is going to happen. There's probably, ultimately, going to be this kind of protection on all new buildings, but the member for Glengarry–Prescott–Russell is ahead of the curve in terms of recognizing that this is necessary.

I want to support this legislation. I think it's important that we understand he has introduced it as a piece of permissive legislation, which should allow everyone in the House, I believe, to support it, because what it says is municipalities can choose to adopt this bylaw.

As the members for Thornhill and Beaches–East York and Glengarry–Prescott–Russell identified, so much of the business that we do in our houses and in our businesses is dependent on electronic equipment. It really means that we need to have this kind of protection. I think that the issue of whether the power is spiking or not or whether we can even that out completely is a little bit beside the point, because I think that we are always going to have situations where there will be surges to a greater extent or a lesser extent, so we need this surge protection. It's a tragedy that there has been damage done, that people have had to pay out of their pockets for something that is so preventable.

I want to talk just a little moment about the relevance of this legislation to my riding, Don Valley West. Some of my constituents have said to me that the greatest potential for application of this bill really is in high-rise buildings, because so much of the equipment is dependent on electronics, so the safety of many of our constituents is actually dependent on having this kind of protection in place.

In fact, one of my constituents, Ali Baig, who has been in the electrical business for the last 20 years, points out this: He says “Our homes and workplaces have a lot of electronic and electrical equipment, and now more than ever we require surge protection to protect this equipment. Electrical surges can damage connected equipment and slowly destroy the insulation on the wiring, which could lead to potential problems over time. When compared to the replacement cost of connected equipment and other hazards associated with it, the cost to protect is minimal.”

Because this is permissive legislation, because it could be so beneficial and because the member for Glengarry–Prescott–Russell is in touch with what constituents are

looking for, I hope that all of us will support this legislation.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Leeanna Pendergast): Further debate?

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: An interesting subject. This tends to divide along political lines, I think, really.

The member points out that he's not forcing anyone to accept this regulation, that it would be up to municipalities to either pass a bylaw that implemented this, but I would just suggest to the member that if a municipality does pass a bylaw, then the people within that community are being forced. Whether they would use the surge protector or not, they are being forced to pay for it and to defray the costs of those people who do need it.

It was interesting some years ago that I was involved with the chemical industry, and they, of course, have a huge investment in protecting themselves from surges. Mini blackouts of as much as half a second can freeze up electrical processes that are creating chemicals in the Silicon Valley down in Sarnia. So they're very, very sensitive to any fluctuation in power whatsoever. One of the reasons they located in Sarnia to such a degree was because Ontario does have a very consistent and relatively clean source of energy.

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Another indication of that was when we had the ice storm—in 2002, was it?—where it was found that in the ice storm that went through eastern Ontario and Quebec, two very large dairy producing areas, about 80% of the farms in Quebec, had portable generators, whereas only about 20% of the farms in eastern Ontario had portable generators. The reason for that, of course, was that the power in rural Quebec was so unreliable that you had to have a portable generator on your farm to protect yourself from power blackouts and the need for electricity during milking times. In Ontario, the power was so reliable that only about 20% of the farmers in the more remote areas of eastern Ontario actually had generators on their properties.

The power in Ontario has been, over time, fairly clean and fairly reliable when compared with other places in Canada and I'm sure other places around the world. The member from Thornhill mentioned that we should perhaps clean up the power at the source in Ontario, and I would ask them at what cost that would be, as I would suggest to the member for Beaches–East York, who suggested that the government might want to supply a fund for more individuals to add surge protectors to their homes. His home, he mentioned, was built in the 1950s. I wonder why I should use my tax dollars to retrofit his home when I may or may not need it. As I say, this debate divides along political lines: The NDP would like everybody else to pay for their upgrades, whereas I feel significantly different than that.

I think we've covered the facts of what surges are, how they spike and how the aligned voltages move up and down very rapidly. They're very short-lived. They do their damage very quickly. A lightning strike would be a long surge—a very long surge, in fact. It could be caused

by many different things, including the electrical companies switching on and off. Again, there was an example of some damage being done. When you do have a power outage, it's important to immediately go around your house and turn off all the sensitive pieces of equipment that you may have left on. Many of them have an off switch that automatically turns them off, but it's a good thing to make sure that almost everything in your home is turned off until the power comes back on. I don't know if you've ever experienced a light bulb blowing when the power comes back on, but that would be the result of a surge.

Surges can happen, most dramatically, over a very brief period of time, but they can also happen over long periods of time. Little surges can accumulate in equipment and eventually cause the problems to occur. I've heard a surge protector described as like a sponge. It absorbs those electrical surges as they come through. However, unlike a sponge, this electricity absorber does wear out over time, and so it has to be maintained. If you have a surge protector on your computer and your computer may have had a number of surges over its life, you may want to think about replacing that surge protector because it may be wearing out. It may be losing its ability to absorb those surges.

Some of the background of this: We all of course want safe power. I think I've outlined the fact that Ontario does have very safe power and reliable power compared to those jurisdictions that surround us and around the world. Any of these things can add expenses to individuals, especially those individuals who are not particularly careful in protecting their equipment against surges and those kinds of things. And it's not just computers that we're talking about; almost every major appliance in the house has a computer component built into it, computer chips that control some facet of it. Those things are very sensitive.

I guess what I would want to know is how much this is going to cost in bureaucracy and red tape and how much the public would be willing to pay for this kind of thing. And how can that risk be reduced? That hasn't been talked about. What are the costs of the inspections and the red tape that this is going to add? Is this the right time in Ontario's history to add more regulation? Is there more technical input that we should have in this industry? There are a number of unanswered questions. Until those questions are answered, I'm not sure I can support this legislation.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Leeanna Pendergast): Further debate?

Mr. Bob Delaney: Speaker, did you know that the average home is hit with more than 20 internal surges in the course of a typical day? These surges are distributed throughout your home, and they can significantly shorten, as some of the other speakers have pointed out, the life of your electronics and your equipment.

The member for Glengarry–Prescott–Russell has brought forth a bill that I think is one that deserves some discussion. Whether it's adopted in this incarnation or

whether it's significantly altered through committee hearings, what he's done is to say to Ontarians, "Let's start a dialogue here, because this is something that can affect you."

I just off the top of my head made a list of some of the things in typical homes that have printed circuit boards in them that can be fried by a good, hard surge. They would include today: your fringe, your washer, your dryer, your stove, your microwave, your dishwasher, your computer, your television, your television converter and your hydro meter itself.

In the old days, what did you have? You had your radio, you had your television—and in the days before computers and fax machines, that was about it. But today, your homes are increasingly run on machinery and electronics that, to one degree or another, operate on a printed circuit board and, more importantly, are always plugged in. In the old days you could say, "Gee, I'm not too concerned about what happens during an electrical storm because I've just pulled out the plug on the television"—well, today, you don't do that.

Now, what exactly are we talking about? Electricity is 120 volts AC and it's 60 cycles per second, so you have what's called a sine wave, for those of you who remember some of your high school math. In a surge, instead of there being a continuous stream of these sine waves, a surge goes right up like that, and a surge protector clips those peaks and valleys. That's what a surge protector does.

One of the things about the power grid that's important to remember is that to a greater degree, it's being distributed. It's no longer power from a few large, central baseload generating stations. Today, even in my own neighbourhood, for example, in something like the Lisgar GO train station with its brand new windmill, a good, strong gust of wind may generate a surge that may affect some of the people who are drawing power off of it, and as the main power runs off the station, that could cause a power surge right in the station—a very good argument for having exactly that, a surge protector there. Hospitals such as Credit Valley, of course, would normally have a surge protector as a matter of course.

What the member has brought forth is a powerful idea, an idea whose idea may come—he's ahead of his curve, as some of the other members have said. But I think what he's done is to start a discussion. What he's done is to bring up something that's important. The key thing about the bill is that it's permissive. It says to municipalities, "You may"; it doesn't say, "You must."

I'm certainly going to support this. For those of you who work from your home and in your home office, where you too may have a whole variety of electronics, this is something you want to think about very carefully. If the value of the work that you do depends upon the electronics you use, you may make the decision that, "I can't afford not to have a surge protector."

It's a good bill. It's a good start. It deserves support.

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The Acting Speaker (Ms. Leeanna Pendergast): Further debate?

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: First, thank you very much to Mr. Lalonde for introducing this bill with respect to surge protectors in new residential and commercial buildings. The member from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell points out quite openly that on December 23 he had 86 claims that were submitted to Hydro One and that he had something to do with it very directly. These were complaints about damaged furnace motors, electronics, appliances, dishwashers, computers, refrigerators etc.

Now, in my own riding of Davenport, on January 13 of this year we had a power outage. The reason we had a power outage was because either a dog or a raccoon got into the transformer station near Dufferin and Bloor Street, and it caused the electrical system to short. The power outage affected not 86 people, in terms of their claims, but it affected hundreds of thousands of people. That doesn't just happen once; it happens fairly frequently.

All previous speakers have indicated that when the power comes back on, that's when the spiking occurs and that's what happens when some of the motors are burning.

Now, Madam Speaker, I would like to have unanimous consent to show the power bar, because it's an important item in terms of coming to grips with a surge.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Leeanna Pendergast): The member from Davenport, the Speaker would remind the House that props are not permitted in the House. I'd ask you to just maybe put it down on your desk.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Leeanna Pendergast): Is there unanimous consent? Thank you.

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: To make a long story short, most people who have called my office have said, "Well, Mr. Ruprecht, thank you very much, but I understand that power surges are being protected by power bars." Now, this is a power bar that many homes and certainly many of our offices have. A power bar is not a surge protector. A power bar is simply a protector; if there's enough electricity going in here, it stops the breaker from going off. So if any one of our constituents believes that they are being protected by a power bar, this is not the case.

I'm delighted, in fact, to support this bill. I'm happy that Mr. Lalonde is bringing this bill forward simply because it is very important.

In terms of the question the member from Thornhill is raising about the mayor—the mayor of Toronto or any mayor of a municipality—being able to add some taxes, well, that's certainly something to consider. But essentially, I simply say this: The member has identified a real, significant issue. It actually happened to me in terms of having my fridge blown. I unplugged everything when the transformer station blew, but I left the fridge on, and when the power came back on, the fridge didn't work afterwards.

So it's an important bill. We all have our own stories about power surges and spikes and sags, but I certainly will support this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Leeanna Pendergast): Further debate? The member from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell, you have two minutes.

Mr. Jean-Marc Lalonde: I want to thank the members from Thornhill, Beaches—East York, Don Valley West, Halton, Mississauga—Streetsville and Davenport. I have taken a few notes of the comments brought to my attention—or to the attention of the House—by some of the members.

I just wanted to say that it is true: This equipment could wear out. But I want to make sure that everybody understands that this equipment has a little warning light on it, so if the equipment is wearing out because of too many power outages, then definitely the equipment or the device could be affected. So you have the precaution, or the facility in there to notice if your equipment has to be taken care of, or looked over again.

There's also one point that I would like to bring up: Many, many contractors do recommend this already when they build a new home. They recommend to the buyer that they should have a surge protector.

Also, when we refer to the costs, ESA is doing all of the electrical inspections. They are the ones that have the power, and I just can't see any additional expenses for inspecting the power surge protectors. The installation is a matter of a few minutes, so, again, I just can't see what the cost would be in there.

Once again, I would like to thank everyone, and I would like to really thank my legislative assistant, Christine Pelletier, for all the work she has done on this, because she has done a lot of research; and also Richard Lalonde from Queenswood Heights for having brought this to my attention.

CULTURAL DIVERSITY

Mr. Reza Moridi: I would like to thank you for the opportunity to move this resolution today, which reads:

That, in the opinion of this House, to celebrate the cultural diversity of this province, and to promote linguistic and cultural diversity and multilingualism, the Legislative Assembly of Ontario should proclaim February 21 as International Mother Language Day in Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Leeanna Pendergast): Mr. Moridi moves private member's notice of motion number 66. Pursuant to standing order 98, the member for Richmond Hill has 12 minutes for his presentation.

Mr. Reza Moridi: Bonjour, and hello.

Remarks in other languages.

Mr. Reza Moridi: These were simple greetings in a few of the 150 or so languages that are spoken across our great province of Ontario. If you wanted to say hello in every language on the planet, you would have to learn 6,000 languages and greet at least 6.5 billion people.

I rise in this Legislature to present you and my honourable colleagues with an initiative that is very close to my heart: the recognition and celebration of our mother languages.

The recognition of our mother languages was originally put forward by a Canadian organization called Mother Language Lovers of the World. Initiated by this Canadian organization, and supported by the government

of Bangladesh in November 1999, UNESCO proclaimed February 21 as International Mother Language Day. The objective of this day is to raise awareness of linguistic and cultural traditions, based on understanding, tolerance and dialogue, and also to promote linguistic and multilingual diversity and education.

Several jurisdictions, including the city of Toronto, have also recognized this special day. Ontario has always been on the frontier and the leader in integration and recognition of every citizen's heritage and culture. The passage of this motion will be another monument to our acceptance, tolerance, understanding and recognition of the value of our diverse society.

It might be of interest to my honourable colleagues to know that on the federal level two private members' bills were introduced to mark International Mother Language Day, which have yet to pass first reading.

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International Mother Language Day is also formally recognized by the United Nations General Assembly, which proclaimed the year 2008 as the International Year of Languages. Both UNESCO and the United Nations General Assembly have recognized the importance of promoting and ensuring the survival of over 6,000 languages that are spoken around the world. Dr. Koïchiro Matsuura, director general of UNESCO, highlights UNESCO's interest in promoting multilingualism, in particular in the education system, by encouraging proficiency in at least three languages; that is, a mother tongue, a national language and a language of communication.

The promotion of linguistic and cultural diversity is supported by a commitment to dialogue among peoples, cultures and civilizations. UNESCO promotes linguistic and cultural diversity and multilingualism, and International Mother Language Day is observed yearly by many UNESCO member states around the world.

Language is the cornerstone of culture and provides a means of communication among people. Language has long been a tool of learning, a tool for communication and an important niche for the development of an individual's personality and character.

Ontario is home to people from 200 different ethnic origins, who speak more than 150 languages, many of whom are present in this Legislature today to witness the passing of this significant motion. I would like to take this opportunity to recognize representatives from the Afghan, Arab, Armenian, Azerbaijani, Bangladeshi, Cambodian, Chinese, Ethiopian, Greek, Italian, Iranian, Kurdish, Nepalese, Pakistani, Sri Lankan and Turkish communities who have joined us today in the public and members' galleries.

Of the top 20 languages spoken in the world—such as Mandarin, English, Hindi, Arabic, Italian, Korean, Russian and Portuguese—a large majority are spoken right here in Ontario, making the passage of this motion of great significance.

Languages are the most powerful instruments of preserving and developing our tangible and intangible heritage. They are also a very important tool in the development of a child's education.

Globalization has resulted in a significant increase in population mobility. On this note, James P. Cummins, a professor and the Canada Research Chair in the curriculum, teaching and learning department at the University of Toronto's Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, states that the consequence of population mobility is linguistic, cultural, racial and religious diversity within schools. To illustrate this fact, in the city of Toronto 58% of kindergarten students come from homes where standard English is not the usual language of communication. The results of research on children's mother language have emphasized the importance of mother language on their overall personal and educational development.

When children continue to develop their abilities in two or more languages throughout their primary school years, they gain a deeper understanding of language and learn how to use it effectively. When they develop literacy in both languages, they are able to process, compare and contrast the ways in which the two languages organize their reality.

More than 150 research studies conducted during the past 35 years strongly support what Goethe, the famous German philosopher, once said: "The person who knows only one language does not truly know that language." The research suggests that bilingual children may also develop more flexibility in their thinking as a result of processing information through different languages.

Unfortunately, there are many languages in existence that are facing the threat of extinction. According to the Atlas of the World's Languages in Danger, of 121 Native American languages in Canada, only six are fully functional and about 10 are extinct. Of all other Indian languages spoken in Canada, a total of 104 are threatened to varying degrees, with 19 of those moribund and 28 seriously endangered. It is our duty and obligation to protect these vital implements of culture and life.

The atlas also points out some very disturbing statistics. Out of approximately 6,000 languages spoken in the world, more than 200 have become extinct during the last three generations, 538 are critically endangered, 502 are severely endangered, 632 are definitely endangered and 607 are unsafe.

The death of a language can have a catastrophic domino effect. Many forms of cultural heritage, tradition and oral expression of a community, such as poetry, legends and even jokes, can disappear. To quote the director-general of UNESCO, "The loss of languages is also detrimental to humanity's grasp of biodiversity, as they transmit much knowledge about ... nature and the universe."

Here in Ontario, we are proud of the diversity of the cultures that exist across our province. We have gained many valuable assets and knowledge in various aspects of our daily lives from this diversity.

Language has always been a form of patriotism and has brought a sense of belonging among cultures and communities. It is our small communities that are the backbone of our infrastructure and our strength in Ontario. The preservation of these communities and ethnic

groups is more important than ever when we are facing such unprecedented times.

The recognition of International Mother Language Day in Canada and in Ontario will be a step forward in achieving that goal. Let's adopt this practice, which will promote and protect languages. With the passage of this motion, Ontario will play an essential role in advocating, supporting and monitoring policies and actions in favour of cultural diversity and multilingualism at the international level.

Furthermore, let's continue on the path of the favourable linguistic policies for which Canada is so famous on the international scene. Let us help to increase the number of speakers in several indigenous languages.

Remarks in other languages.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Leeanna Pendergast): Further debate?

Mr. Peter Shurman: It's a pleasure to rise, and I'll say at the outset that I'm going to support my colleague from Richmond Hill, and recall for him that last year his private member's business was not that far removed from what we're talking about this year. Last year he asked us to declare a day that would recognize the Persian New Year, Nowruz. I remember rising in support of that motion, and it passed.

The other thing I'd like to say about the member who is proposing this legislation is that he and I have some business in common. The member represents an adjoining riding to mine, or maybe he would say I represent an adjoining riding to his. He's in Richmond Hill and I'm in Thornhill, in the north part of the GTA, just north of the Toronto border. We often see each other, and when we do, it's usually at community events which are multicultural in nature. If memory serves me correctly—and I see the member nodding—the last thing we attended together was the Menaka Thakkar Dance Company, which is an Indian dance company that takes people into its fold from all over the GTA, particularly the northern area of his riding. It resides, has its home, in my riding of Thornhill. We always enjoy those things.

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What I want to say is this: I'm a little concerned with creating yet another memorial day or commemorative day for anything in the province of Ontario at this point, because we are so diversified that we memorialize almost everything with a day of its own, and one tends to lose track.

Now, here's what I have to say about multiculturalism, or if you wish, mother tongue. I represent a riding, Thornhill, that is arguably the most multicultural riding and the most diverse riding in the province, and if it is, then equally arguably, the most diverse riding in the entire country.

We know that in Thornhill, at last count, there are a few more than 150 different languages spoken on a daily basis. In my own way, I try to celebrate that both inside this House—I've mentioned it in debate many, many times—and outside of the House, because we celebrate national days of various countries here on the grounds of

the Legislature; we all go to flag raisings in our own ridings and we go to events that relate to community groups. So there's no issue there. I guess the point I'm trying to make is that my riding has International Mother Language Day basically every day of the year.

The reason I support this—because it's really a motherhood type of motion—is that the member has proposed it, not because we need it. I'll tell you why we don't need it, and we're unique amongst the family of nations in being able to say this. We don't need UNESCO to tell us that we have to memorialize mother tongues if we live in Canada, and very particularly, if we live in the GTA. Why? Because the GTA is home to so many different languages that are spoken on a regular basis and that we cherish and preserve.

I remember when I was a child, we would celebrate, as we do these days, Mother's Day and Father's Day. As a child I would say, "Why don't we have Children's Day?" and my parents would say, "Well, because Children's Day is every day." I think everyone has heard that little catchphrase. I guess what I'm saying here is that International Mother Language Day is every day in the province of Ontario, and very notably in ridings where we are the proud home to so many different, diverse ethnicities from all over the world.

Once again, I don't want to go very long on this. I'd like to add my voice to those welcoming all of you who are here to support this member's initiative. I will vote for this member's initiative, but I've got to tell you, in the province of Ontario, International Mother Language Day is every single day, and although you're going to get your day, you don't need it.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Leeanna Pendergast): Further debate?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I will be supporting the motion by the member from Richmond Hill, and I want to say, in response to the member from Thornhill, that we do need such a motion. I'm going to explain why, and I'm going to be supportive and critical at the same time a bit later on—not of him, but his government—in a mild way. But the reason—

Mrs. Liz Sandals: You always do that.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: But what else would you want me to do?

The reason we need it is that there are a lot of people in this society and in Canada who actually oppose the retention of mother tongues. While they speak it, there are people who don't like it. Those of you who are here in the audience will know from others who you may know, if they are monolingual, that they may not take such a great interest in your speaking another language. This is a fact.

I remember my days as a school trustee at the Toronto Board of Education, when we were fighting for—this is 1982, and before I was there—the teaching of what we used to call then heritage languages; another term would be "mother tongue." We had tremendous political battles, until you had many of us, mostly New Democrats, I would say—I know you hate to hear it; even those of you

who don't know this hate to hear it—who argued for the defence of the learning of third languages within the regular school day. Those who opposed it said it shouldn't be done in the regular school day: "It should be taught, if they want, after school on their own time." Most of the Tories on the board who declared themselves non-political were of that view, and most of the Liberals were of a similar view—less virulent, but of the same view. I don't understand why, because there are so many good Liberals here today who are going to support this motion. In fact, dare I say it, most of you will. But at the Toronto Board of Education, we had one heck of a fight.

You know what's happening today, to bring you back to the criticism? Those languages are dying off at the Toronto board. And why? There's no support. If there's no adequate financial support by the provincial government, those languages that are taught in 17 schools will die. What's happening is, principals are not supporting it, except in a few instances, and once parents stop defending it, the programs disappear.

What I will speak to in a few moments, to the member of Richmond Hill, is how his government can support his motion, because otherwise it's an empty motion. It's just empty symbolism. If we just simply say, "Let's celebrate our differences and support mother tongues," it means absolutely nothing.

I am one who says often, "Monolingualism can be cured." I think even those who only have one language who believe they can learn another language, can. It's curable. But there are many who only speak one language who don't want to learn any other language. I'm one of those who says that multilingualism is good; that defending the mother tongue is okay; that it's not un-Canadian to do so; that in fact, it speaks to who we are and that we should be proud to be able to speak other languages and to be able to connect to who we were, because that's who we are.

Some of us can't hide the fact. Those of us who are white could be taken for any kind of nationality, but if you're black, you're black. If you're South Asian, you're not entirely like those who are purely white. You can't escape that. I say, we don't have to escape anything. We can be proud of who we are, both in colour and in languages, and that it's good for us psychologically, linguistically and economically. We made those arguments to the Toronto board in 1976 and 1982 when I was there, and the only reason why we won it—it was by one vote, and mostly, as I say, New Democrats. That's just the way it is. That's just the way it was.

Our identity is about cultural diversity, and there are those who say that it's the cultural diversity that divides us. I don't believe that for a moment. I believe that diversity is what identifies us as Canadians. We should be proud of that, and we should make our identity that very thing. But you've got a whole lot of people in this society who are simply saying, "The reason why we're not strong as Canadians in terms of having an identity is because we don't have an identity," rather than saying, "Our identity is multiple. There is no one, single identity

for Canadians. It's a multiple identity, and we should be proud of it." Yet we fight it each and every day.

1550

I remember Professor Cummings from those days in 1976, 1978, 1980 and 1982. He was there arguing why the learning of another language is a good thing. He made the case, an intellectual case, as to why it was good. Nobody listened, because it wasn't about intellectual arguments, it was what people felt. Why do you think so many people are so, dare I say it, anti-French? There are so many people who are anti-Quebec in this country. I've never quite understood it. I've been lucky enough to learn French through core in the Catholic school system and at the secondary level public school system continuing on with core French, and becoming an English and French teacher. I was proud of it and proud to be able to speak Italian. I would like to be able to speak French better and Italian better. I'm proud to say that I can get by in Spanish because my wife is Chilean, so I've learned Spanish along the way. I'm not perfect, but I've learned it. I understand a fair amount of Portuguese, and I'm proud of it.

Ms. Sophia Aggelonitis: What about Greek?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I would love to learn Greek. I had so many neighbours in my neighbourhood on Shaw Street where I grew up, where Greeks and Portuguese and Italians grew up together. I wish I could learn the language. Yet you have people who don't want to know anything else because English for them is sufficient, and everyone else who comes into the country should only learn the language and nothing else. That's the debate we have.

So do we need this motion? Of course we do. But as it is, it's utterly empty. If you do not, as a government, do something to strengthen this motion so that it becomes a reality, it's meaningless.

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: It's not government; it's his motion.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: No, no. It's not his motion. It's his motion supported by all the Liberals who are here, supported I'm sure by the ministers, and you could do something. When all of you Liberals who are present today and those who are going to come to vote for it at 4 o'clock, vote for this, it means you have a stake in making this better. It means you have a stake in saying how we make this happen, because simply celebrating our diversity is not enough.

All of you know, those of you who are here, that racism exists in this country. There are many who don't want to say it. They don't even want to utter the word "racism." It exists. There was a fascinating article that I read just about two weeks ago where the black community feels so discriminated against that they retreat into their own community even more, by the mere fact of being discriminated on, than the other groups who become more Canadian.

It's discrimination and racism that exists in this society. So celebrating our differences means nothing if we don't have an anti-racist approach to ourselves. That's

what I mean about putting meat to these motions. Do we need it? Yes. But do we need to do something more? Absolutely. Do we need to promote the learning of French? Absolutely. It is a bicultural, bilingual country, indeed, and it's multilingual, multicultural, and it's enshrined in section 27 of the Constitution. Yes, it is.

We are not supporting our French community as we should. We should be encouraging all of our children, no matter where we come from, to learn French, because Quebec is right beside us. We should take it as an opportunity, but we don't. When you look at the aboriginal communities, the First Nations communities, they're losing their language. Are we helping as a government to promote the learning of First Nations languages? We're not. We're not doing that, and we're not doing that with French, we're not doing that with the Inuit people, and we're not doing that with the Metis either.

The fact of the matter is that, as a government, we have a strong role to play. If you don't play that leadership role, this will not mean anything. We have a role to promote; we have a role to fund programs. You have an obligation as a government, as ministers, as members, once you pass this motion, as you will, to actually decide what you can do about it.

If our languages are dying in the Toronto school board because they're not being promoted and they're not being supported and there are no funds to promote those programs, then this motion is absolutely worthless, because as all of you know, and all of you up there know, as I know—my children speak Italian not so badly, but the two children of my first daughter do not speak Italian—it will disappear. So you can promote your mother tongue motion, but if you don't support it with real substance, with money and support and governmental obligations to do so, your children will lose their language. That's what will happen. If you don't want that to happen, then you and other members as they speak, when you have the opportunity to say what you can do to make this motion real, if you don't tell us what you can do about that, then at the end of the day we will have all supported it, we will have felt good and nothing will happen.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Leeanna Pendergast): Further debate?

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I'm pleased to rise today in support of the resolution put forward by my colleague the member from Richmond Hill to recognize February 21 as International Mother Language Day in the province of Ontario.

Certainly, here in Ontario, in the year 2009, we can be proud of the progress we have made in recognizing linguistic diversity in our society, not only in tolerance but in the promotion of learning the languages related to one's own heritage.

My riding of York South-Weston is home to people of all different backgrounds who speak a variety of languages. Many of them are newcomers. We have come a long way since the postwar period, when many Italian-Canadians—for example, my mother—or Jewish immigrants would be able to describe small groups of people

standing together at the corner of a street in Toronto, speaking their own mother language, that would be ordered to disperse by the police.

Harold Troper well describes this face of Toronto's immigrant past in *History of Immigration to Toronto Since the Second World War: From Toronto "the Good" to Toronto "the World in a City,"* written for the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at U of T. I would like to share a few paragraphs with the House.

"It was not uncommon for immigrants speaking their mother tongue in the street or on public transit to be made to feel out of place and told to "Speak white!"

"Teachers and school administrators, thinking they were liberating immigrant children from narrow, old-world parochialism or protecting them from schoolyard bullies, took liberties with many an immigrant child's most personal possession—his or her name. Gabriella became Gail, Luigi became Louis, Olga became Alice, and Hershel became Harold.

"All the while some in the press and several local politicians warned against the evils of immigrant overcrowding, ghettoization, and crime.

"But not all. Slowly at first, Torontonians became more comfortable with the new foods, polyphony of languages, and neighbourhoods that immigrant presence brought in its wake. And for some, comfort gradually turned to pride in Toronto's new-found cosmopolitan image."

Works such as this continue to shed light on past attitudes of Ontario society towards the speaking of mother tongues in Canadian history. As well, institutions like the Multicultural History Society of Ontario documented changing attitudes toward multilingualism and ethnic diversity in our society.

Supported by the Ontario Trillium Foundation, the Multicultural History Society carries out projects such as *Family Stories, Treasured Memories*, a school program that focuses on the settlement experiences of 20th-century immigrants in Toronto.

I also want to mention the multilingual media; that's another important example of how speaking a different language in contemporary Ontario society does not make the speaker any less a part of the day-to-day Ontario reality. In fact, family re-unification and consequent integration in Canadian society is made easier through multilingual media.

But the importance of recognizing a day such as International Mother Language Day in the province of Ontario is also important for our aboriginal peoples. The terrible legacy of the residential school system in Canada is well-known. Through the policy of "aggressive assimilation," 150,000 aboriginal Inuit and Metis children students were discouraged from speaking their first language. If they were caught, they would experience severe punishment.

Can you imagine reaching out to your own parent by writing a letter in a language which many parents can't even read? Fortunately, Canada is currently addressing

the issue of residential schools through the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

Through initiatives such as the resolution that has been brought forward today by my colleague from Richmond Hill, the province of Ontario will be honouring the call from the United Nations and sending a clear message that there is definitely room in Ontario for the safe speaking of one's language in our society today.

1600

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Leeanna Pendergast): Further debate?

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: I'm very pleased to say that I will be supporting this bill enthusiastically. I don't have a lot to say about it, but I'll say a couple of things.

I'm very proud of Ontario's record in multiculturalism and how we have handled the huge influx of new Canadians and new Ontarians who now call Ontario home. In fact, I read a few months ago that Ontario—Toronto in particular is the most diverse city the world has ever known. The only other city that would come close to Toronto's experience in measuring their ethnic diversity would be New York City in 1910. Toronto is more diverse than that city was, and yet in the last 40, 50 years, as this diversity has come to our country, we have not seen riots, we have not seen disruptions, we have not seen anything that would be considered to be out of the ordinary as far as people moving into a community and being absorbed by that community. Certainly there are and were incidents that one would have hoped would not have happened. However, the number of those and the severity of those, I would suggest, have been less in Ontario than they would have been in almost any other city in the world.

The second thing I'd like to say is, I was talking to a friend of mine who is Indian, and he tells me that in India, there are over 60 different alphabets. We in Ontario may think we understand a little bit about multiculturalism. When you consider that in one country there are 60 different alphabets, it boggles the mind to think of the diversity that must occur in that community itself. Within those 60 different alphabets there are literally hundreds of different languages, to the degree where two villages that may be located five miles apart can actually speak to each other and understand what they're saying, but they may write in different alphabets. So that kind of diversity isn't something that Ontarians are familiar with—or weren't familiar with up until 20 or 30 years ago. I think the transition that Ontario has made in those 20 or 30 years has been an excellent one.

I think that brings to a conclusion just about everything that I wanted to say, other than to congratulate the member for bringing this bill in. I look forward to supporting it. I look forward to celebrating the language day in the future.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Leeanna Pendergast): Further debate? The member from London—Fanshawe.

Mr. Khalil Ramal: Thank you, Madam Speaker. By the way, you look good in that chair.

I'm pleased and honoured to stand up and speak in support of the resolution brought by my colleague the member from Richmond Hill. It's important to talk about the diversity of multiculturalism in this province. I think the member from Richmond Hill is a strong advocate on behalf of the multiculturalism and diversity in this province. In this province, we welcome people from every part of the globe. They come to this beautiful province. They come with a rich culture, they come with rich skills and, importantly, they have the ability and the talent to connect us with every corner of this planet. That's why I think it's important to celebrate that diversity, build on it, enhance it and embrace it on a level—give us the chance as Ontarians to be able to speak every language on the whole planet.

As the member mentioned earlier, Ontarians speak every language on the whole planet, practise every religion, even though all of us in this beautiful province live in peace and tranquility, enjoy freedom without any fear of any oppression from any dictatorship or from anyone telling us not to do something.

It's important not just to celebrate this event but to embrace and believe in it. It's important for all of us as a province, as a society, as a community and as a country because it gives us the tools and the ability to reach out and also enhance our ability economically, culturally and whatever you want in terms of strengthening this province. I know the member from Trinity-Spadina, from the third party, mentioned many different times that the government should support this initiative. Yes, the government should support this initiative. I know it's a lot for the schools and the province of Ontario to open their doors to educate people from different languages. I can tell you that in my riding of London-Fanshawe we have a school where, every Saturday, students from different backgrounds have a chance to go and study the language they want, to study their native tongue. I feel it's important that it should be built on and expanded to include everyone in the province of Ontario.

He also mentioned something very important: To speak another language is important for all of us because it gives us the ability to understand other people. Language is the door to enter any culture, to understand other people's culture. Since we need immigrants in the province of Ontario, I think it is our obligation and duty as elected officials, as the people of this province, to educate ourselves and understand others to maintain tranquility and peace in this province.

I congratulate my colleague the member from Richmond Hill for his devotion to and passion about multiculturalism and diversity. He sees language as a door; he sees language as an important tool to understand others. Again, I'm going to support this motion. I hope everyone, as I heard, is going to support it. I think the government, with the Minister of Education with us here, is going to endorse it and give us the tools and support on a regular basis to maintain mother languages in the province of Ontario and the nation of Canada.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Leeanna Pendergast): Further debate?

Mr. Mike Colle: I guess the member from Trinity-Spadina should be commended for his passion because he reflects the passion of the member from Richmond Hill. And the member from Richmond Hill, I think, represents not only talking the talk, but walking the walk. In other words, he's been here before ensuring that we do not just pay lip service—no pun intended—to language rights. When we talk about language, International Mother Language Day, we're talking about language rights. We're talking about rights, and everybody in this province has a right to speak many languages. You have the right to speak the language that you were born with.

It's interesting. The member from Richmond Hill—English is not his first language. The member from London-Fanshawe—English is not his first language. My next-door neighbour in York South-Weston—English is not her first language. The member from Trinity-Spadina—English is not his first language. And my first language is not English either. In what other Legislature on this continent would you have five speakers stand up who were not born in this country and who do not have English as their first language? But we're here because Ontario does give opportunity not only to celebrate, not only to tolerate, but to actually have the right to speak and practise in the culture and language of your origin. We have that right here and we must tell our young people. We've got young people here who should be aware of that. Do not let anybody tell you that it is enough to speak just one language. As many languages as you can practise, the better it is for you, the better it is for society, the better it is for Canada and Ontario. We should be encouraging multiple-language practice, as many languages as possible.

It's interesting. It wasn't, as the member from Halton Hills mentioned, always this way in Ontario. I can remember as a child in Ontario when the police would come along the street with a billy stick, hitting us on our arms and shoulders because we stood on College Street. You could not walk on College Street if you spoke Italian. The police or the government of the day never said that was wrong. Every Sunday, the police would walk up and down College Street, hitting us with billy clubs. Why? Because we spoke Italian on College Street. You couldn't stand on the street—and nobody defended us. Nobody said that was wrong. Every day, they'd walk up and down College Street with billy clubs, telling us, "Move along. You can't stand here."

1610

Thankfully, times have changed, and with resolutions like this, we are reminded of the fact that we have the right to practise our culture and our religion. Some people say that it's just language. Well, we know that language is the tip of the iceberg of our rights and freedoms in this great country, in this great province, in this great city. Sometimes these motions are given short shrift, but really it's a time for us to reflect that these are about the rights of all of us, and to remind us that we must do more to ensure that our children, the ones who are sitting up here, learn to speak many languages and are

proud of speaking Spanish or Mandarin or Farsi. Speak your language proudly.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Leeanna Pendergast): Further debate? Further debate?

The member from Richmond Hill, you have two minutes to reply.

Mr. Reza Moridi: I would like to thank the members from Halton, Thornhill, York South–Weston, London–Fanshawe, Trinity–Spadina and Eglinton–Lawrence, who spoke so eloquently on the subject of this motion.

Through the concept of International Mother Language Day was initiated by a group of Bangladeshi Canadians, yet we could not give appropriate acknowledgement to this special day in Canada. International Mother Language Day is celebrated by United Nations' organizations, educational institutions, civil society organizations, professional associations, governments and all other stakeholders to foster respect for and promote the protection of all languages of the world.

Many of the world's languages are in danger of disappearing, and the disappearance of any of our languages is an irreparable loss for the heritage of mankind.

Imagine if Martin Luther King would have delivered his famous speech simply by waving his hands before the public—and left. If he didn't have the capacity of a language in his tongue, would we have understood that he also had a dream? Isn't it true that once spoken language came into our tongue, we started dreaming a human society?

As human beings, we are engaged in protecting our surroundings. Let us now extend our hands to our own mother tongues.

I request this House to vote for this motion so that in Ontario we can observe International Mother Language Day on the 21st day of every February with the highest dignity.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Leeanna Pendergast): The time provided for private members' public business has expired.

CAPPING EXECUTIVE COMPENSATION ACT, 2009

LOI DE 2009 SUR LE PLAFONNEMENT DE LA RÉMUNÉRATION DES CADRES SUPÉRIEURS

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Leeanna Pendergast): We will deal first with ballot item number 19, standing in the name of Ms. Horwath.

Ms. Horwath has moved second reading of Bill 180, An Act to cap executive compensation. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour of the motion will say "aye."

All those opposed to the motion will say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

The vote will be deferred to the end of private members' public business.

MUNICIPAL RESIDENTIAL AND COMMERCIAL SURGE PROTECTOR ACT, 2009

LOI DE 2009 SUR L'INSTALLATION DE PARASURTENSEURS RÉSIDENTIELS ET COMMERCIAUX DANS LES MUNICIPALITÉS

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Leeanna Pendergast): Ballot item number 20.

Monsieur Lalonde has moved second reading of Bill 176. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

Mr. Jean-Marc Lalonde: I would ask that the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on General Government.

CULTURAL DIVERSITY

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Leeanna Pendergast): Mr. Moridi has moved private members' notice of motion number 66. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

CAPPING EXECUTIVE COMPENSATION ACT, 2009

LOI DE 2009 SUR LE PLAFONNEMENT DE LA RÉMUNÉRATION DES CADRES SUPÉRIEURS

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Leeanna Pendergast): Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1615 to 1620.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Leeanna Pendergast): Ms. Horwath has moved second reading of Bill 180, An Act to cap executive compensation. All those in favour of the motion will please rise and remain standing until acknowledged by the Clerk.

Ayes

Bisson, Gilles
Gélinas, France
Kormos, Peter

Marchese, Rosario
Miller, Paul
Prue, Michael

Ruprecht, Tony
Tabuns, Peter

Nays

Albanese, Laura
Arthurs, Wayne
Balkissoon, Bas
Best, Margaret
Brotten, Laurel C.
Brownell, Jim
Cansfield, Donna H.
Chudleigh, Ted
Colle, Mike

Delaney, Bob
Dhillon, Vic
Flynn, Kevin Daniel
Fonseca, Peter
Jaczek, Helena
Jeffrey, Linda
Lalonde, Jean-Marc
Moridi, Reza
Qaadri, Shafiq

Ramal, Khalil
Sandals, Liz
Sergio, Mario
Shurman, Peter
Sousa, Charles
Takhar, Harinder S.
Wynne, Kathleen O.
Zimmer, David

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 8; the nays are 26.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Leeanna Pendergast): I declare the motion lost.

Second reading negatived.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Leeanna Pendergast): Orders of the day.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

EDUCATION AMENDMENT ACT (KEEPING OUR KIDS SAFE AT SCHOOL), 2009

LOI DE 2009 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR L'ÉDUCATION (SÉCURITÉ DE NOS ENFANTS À L'ÉCOLE)

Resuming the debate adjourned on May 27, 2009, on the motion for third reading of Bill 157, An Act to amend the Education Act / Projet de loi 157, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'éducation.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Leeanna Pendergast): Further debate?

Mr. Peter Shurman: I rise to add my comments to the debate on the Education Amendment Act (Keeping Our Kids Safe at School), 2009—would that it were so.

Our caucus was unrelenting on the need for a bill to ensure safety in schools. Some months ago, I recall my colleague the member from Newmarket–Aurora rising in this House to report an incident in his riding of a high school kid who had suffered, at the hands of another student, what we call student-to-student violence. It had gone unreported, and he wanted to raise the issue in the Legislature. That, and another number of like incidents, pushed the government, I suppose, to hasten its introduction of a bill like this, and so it should have; we're all here to see to the safety of people in our province, and no citizens more so than those who are least capable of defending themselves, our children, for whom we as individual parents and as members of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario bear responsibility.

When our caucus members stood in the Legislature demanding mandatory reporting—I underscore the phrase “mandatory reporting”—the Minister of Education refused to acknowledge at that time that it was necessary.

What is mandatory reporting, precisely? That, I think, is at the nub of my concerns about this bill, and I speak directly to the Minister of Education when I say this. Mandatory reporting, to me, is the mandate to report to the appropriate authorities, right up to parents, who are ultimately responsible for their children, what has transpired within a school where student-to-student violence, violence and sexual assault are concerned.

The government introduced, in turn, Bill 157, claiming that it was designed to promote the safety of our children while they are in school. That, again, is why we're all here: to promote safety; all of us feel the same way. I contend that this bill, in the form it is being presented to this Legislature, and ultimately will pass into law, is an empty gesture. I will not be voting for it. Our caucus will not be voting for it. You will say that we don't care when in fact it is precisely that we do care that is the reason for which we will not vote for it in its present form.

Like most legislative proposals originating from this government, this bill is a diversion. It is a diversion. It's a diversion like bait-and-switch or false hope or a shell game or just words, and in this particular case, the words that we're talking about are those two words I've mentioned: “mandatory reporting.”

The bill's objective is to shut us up and change the subject. Well I, for one, side with parents. I want safe schools. The government on the other side, based on the legislation that we're looking at, just simply does not. They want us to keep quiet and I will not keep quiet, not so long as the children of Ontario are the victims. This bill fails to ensure student safety. It turns a blind eye to violence in Ontario schools, student-on-student violence or sexual assault, and it is yet another Liberal PR stunt.

We are coming to the end of this session. There's a lot of legislation being put through here. I want to go on record and say that just because a bill is called the Green Energy Act doesn't make it green, and in the same vein, just because a bill mentions safe schools doesn't make those schools safe. That is my concern; that is the concern of our caucus; that is the concern of Ontario's families.

Ontario's families and Ontario's students deserve better. When we place our kids in the hands of responsible authorities, we expect responsibility. We do not expect the buck to end at a certain place. We do not expect cover-ups. The families that have come forward have shown tremendous courage, and we were their voice to push for meaningful amendments to the legislation. I myself serve on the social policy committee and I was in camera with three different families for three different in-camera deputations. And I will tell you, they were heart-rending, and they were in camera for a very good reason. I watched tearful mothers. I watched damaged children. I watched tearful members of the Liberal government sit opposite to me while the mother of an eight-year-old talked about how her son was held down and restrained by other young children while another child performed oral sex on her eight-year-old son. If that doesn't raise your hackles, what does? The mother was there because she never got news until she pried it out of her son. The principal knew about it, and the first thing the principal did in that particular case was to call the victimizer, not the parents of the victim.

The PC caucus introduced a number of amendments at committee designed to make this bill do what it is supposed to do, which is keep our kids safe at school. Every amendment introduced by our caucus was rejected.

Do we all want safe schools or do we not? Are we on the same page or are we not? Is this about the minister, is this about the member from Guelph, her parliamentary assistant, or is it about the kids?

When I watched the amendment process in this particular case, with reasonable amendments being presented by the Progressive Conservative caucus and by the NDP caucus, and I watched the Liberal delegation to the social policy committee look for direction from the member from Guelph and watched a dismissive wave of the hand take away a perfectly good amendment, I was appalled. We demanded that the lack of accountability on the part of the principal and the government in this bill be addressed. That was our demand. I'm sure that when we did, we spoke for the vast majority of parents in the province of Ontario.

I introduced an amendment which called for true mandatory reporting by the principal in cases of any type of bullying, physical or sexual assault. I moved that section 300.3 of the act, as set out in section 1 of the bill, be amended by adding the following subsections:

"The principal shall not form the opinion referred to ... without consulting with one or more of the following:

"1. The director of education;

"2. The local police department;

"3. The appropriate children's aid society."

1630

Why stop the process at the principal? What makes principals so important? This is about the principal having absolute authority, or some authority, to report back to parents. Parents have the right to know what is happening to their children. My caucus is very, very strong on that. Principals are a daytime authority figure. Parents are 7/24/365 authority figures. Parents are the ones responsible for the rearing of children, and principals have the responsibility to keep them informed. At this time, there is nothing forcing principals to report an incident to parents, so I looked, with my amendment, to another significant level or levels beyond that of simply the principal of a school.

The bill asks that the principal refrain from informing parents of an incident if the principal is aware of a history of abuse in the student's home. That refers to a mitigating circumstance. If this is the case, then there needs to be a level of accountability to contact the police or the children's services to help with the situation. I'll say it again: I watched the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Education dismiss that amendment with a wave of her hand, while her peons nodded in agreement. No school principal should have the absolute authority when it comes to the safety of Ontario's students. Whose dumb idea was that? Are you all going to vote yes and bleat as you do?

We have laws that deal with abuse. Principals should not have the responsibility of enforcing those laws. Appropriate authorities responsible for law enforcement exist already. We want Bill 157 to require principals to consult with one or more of the named authorities, and if you're a normal, thinking parent, so do you.

Instead of introducing the necessary changes to ensure student safety, this government kept the status quo, despite the fact that it obviously hasn't been working. Why did you introduce the bill in the first place if that's all you were going to do?

Let's look at some of the consequences of this approach. Over the past few years we have seen serious incidents go unreported to police. We've seen little to no support for victims. In some cases, the victim was transferred to another school.

For example, a five-year-old was terrorized on the playground daily, throwing up before going to school, until the father resorted to filming the bullying to show the principal. The principal refused to view the video, and the next time the dad tried filming, the principal called in police to falsely report a suspected pedophile at the school. That's what principals can do, not in every case, but in some cases, and that's why principals can't be the final arbiter, the final authority.

In another school, a seven-year-old girl was lured into a corner of the playground known by kids as the gross corner, and sexually assaulted. When the parents complained, the principal pointed out that their daughter had started a kissing club and said she'd be safe, now that it was winter and kids were wearing snow pants.

The safety of children is left in the hands of the principals and teachers, yet the minister saw fit not to outline any accountability or responsibilities for them in Bill 157.

Another example: A school in Oxford county had an incident between a junior kindergartener and a grade 2 boy. The junior kindergarten student continually kicked, hit, tackled and tormented the older boy, to the point that the school finally made them have separate recesses. When the young boy somehow got out into the playground, he swung on a bar and kicked the boy in the back, sending him down the slide. The parents were never even contacted. In September, the parents are moving their children to not only another school but another board altogether, because of the lack of accountability and the lack of security for their son. Is that the kind of Ontario school system that we want? I think not.

These stories are the reason why I stand in debate on this bill today, and why I object so much to this bill.

When my children were in school, I wanted to know if they were in trouble or being harmed in any way. Again, I ask: What parent doesn't? I wanted to know because when it came to my children, my wife and I were the only decision-makers. That's how good parents see the world. They want to know what problems their children have and they want to help them solve them. We took our responsibility as parents very seriously, as do the many parents who came forward to speak about the safety of their children in their schools. We listened to them and we listened to groups on schools. We listened to police groups. And we—again I say—wound up with absolutely no give on the part of the government and no amendments, albeit they were quite reasonable under the circumstances.

Our children's education is a partnership, with the goal to raise healthy, responsible, educated members of society. It is a partnership between parents who have the ultimate responsibility for raising their kids, educators who are responsible for teaching children the skills they will need to succeed, and governments who are charged with the responsibility to design a framework in which children can learn in a safe environment. We can never be permitted to forget that the parents are the key party in that partnership, yet this government is seeking to diminish their rights.

We hear parents complain about the fact that schools seem to take over parental responsibility. We hear people in schools—teachers, principals and administrators alike—complain that they are not parents and don't want to be parents and would prefer that parents take their responsibilities. There's obviously a disconnect here, but ultimately we know where the final authority lies.

Our objective should always be to ensure student safety, and that means that that partnership is an essential element. Instead, with this legislation, the Liberal government is showing us that their objective is to make things easier.

Today I am asking the members of this House to put students first and do what is right for them, and that is to require the principals to report incidents of abuse.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Leeanna Pendergast): Questions and comments?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I listened to the comments made, and it's quite atrocious that some of those experiences have to be suffered by children. I hear what the member is saying. When it comes to bullying, we all have a responsibility as parents, as educators, and as people in society to do all we can in order to try to make sure that our schoolyards are safe for kids.

I was just talking to one of my colleagues and remembering that when I was in grade 5 or 6, living in northern Ontario in Timmins, part of what you saw was that the bigger kids would come into the school and try to show that they could be masters of the schoolyard, as you might say, and so that one had to learn how to deal with that pretty quickly if you didn't want to be the victim of that bully.

But not all kids are able to deal with it, and I think that's really the point. There are some children out there who, for a multitude of reasons, are unable or unwilling, or according to religious beliefs, and are not going to get involved in physical tussles when it comes to bullying. We need to make sure that our schools are areas that are safe for children, because in the end, what kids need is an area where they can feel safe, where they can go to school in the morning and know that when they leave at the end of the day, the biggest problem they had was trying to figure out their math test or trying to figure out their spelling bee. All of the other things that happen in the schoolyard or, unfortunately—as the member described—happen so often as far as sexual abuse, are not things that you see in the school. I think that we need to

find ways to make our classrooms, our schoolyards, and our homes, quite frankly, safer for kids out there.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Leeanna Pendergast): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Liz Sandals: The Safe Schools Action Team, as you know, and the social policy committee did hear some terrible, distressing, heart-wrenching stories where incidents were clearly not handled properly. I want to assure the listeners that Bill 157 does address those stories.

The Safe Schools Action Team also heard some other distressing stories. We heard from a young woman who had been the subject of homophobic bullying and who, when her father found out she was a lesbian, was kicked out of the house. So she went to her mother—her parents were separated. When her mother found out she was a lesbian, she was kicked out of the house. She ended up on the streets of Toronto.

When I was a trustee, I dealt with a case where a mom had the disabilities of a child splashed all over the front page of a local newspaper. It was part of a custody battle. We had to go to the children's aid to get that one closed down.

1640

The committee heard from Martha Mackinnon, who is the counsel for Justice for Children and Youth. She reminded me of a case that I was involved in. It was known as Eaton versus the Brant County Board of Education—I actually helped fund it when I was on the executive office. It went all the way to the Supreme Court, and what the Supreme Court found was that, in fact, the interest of a child sometimes does differ from the interest of the parent, and when the best interests of the parent differs from the interest of the child, then the school has a responsibility to act in the best interests of the child.

Bill 157 reflects that principle. That's why we did not accept the opposition amendments.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Leeanna Pendergast): Questions and comments?

The member from Thornhill, you have two minutes to reply.

Mr. Peter Shurman: I appreciate the comments of both the member from Timmins—James Bay and the member from Guelph.

In terms of the responsibility to do all we can, as mentioned by the member from Timmins—James Bay, he's absolutely correct, and I think that was the nub of what I had to say over the course of the 15 minutes, and that responsibility necessarily does involve parents.

I, too, have memories of the way it was when I went to school. Things have come a long way, but that doesn't negate the fact that kids will be kids and there is such a thing as bullying, and we do have to step in when we have student-on-student violence. Moreover, the sexual aspect of what goes on in schools, even at a very young age, as we heard in committee, is there. Maybe it wasn't there when we were young or maybe we didn't know, but we call this the safe schools act because what's that we want: safe schools.

In terms of the response of the member from Guelph as to why there are sometimes incidents where we don't want parents to be looped in—and she gave a couple of good examples—we in the opposition never argued with that point at all. It wasn't about whether or not there were times when parents shouldn't know, because indeed there are, but it was about the fact that, absent the parents' ability to handle the information that is there in a reasonable way—not kick their kid out of the house because they find out that their sexual orientation is not in keeping with the family's idea of what sexual orientation should be—then our amendments gave the opportunity for the government to find a way for the principal to escalate to a children's aid service or to the police or to authorities—the director of education, for example—who could make informed decisions about the welfare of that child without looping the parents in and being of negative effect to those kids. That amendment and amendments like it were absolutely in order and should have been given more than a wave of the hand, and I say again, that's all they got.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Leeanna Pendergast): Further debate?

Ms. Wynne has moved third reading of Bill 157, An Act to amend the Education Act. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour will please say “aye.”

All those opposed will please say “nay.”

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 30-minute bell.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Leeanna Pendergast): I have received a request from the chief government whip that this vote be deferred. So ordered.

Third reading vote deferred.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Leeanna Pendergast): Orders of the day?

HOUSE SITTINGS

HEURES DE SÉANCE

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I move that, notwithstanding standing order 6(a), when the House adjourns on Thursday, September 17, 2009, it shall stand adjourned until Wednesday, September 23, 2009.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Leeanna Pendergast): Ms. Smith has moved government notice of motion number 137.

Further debate? Ms. Smith.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: Today we are moving for an adjournment for just a couple of days in September. The House is returning on Monday, September 14. We will be adjourning on Thursday, September 17—normal business. We are asking that the House be adjourned for Monday, September 21 and Tuesday, September 22, in order to accommodate members' attendance at the International Plowing Match and Rural Expo, this year being

held in Temiskaming, or the community of Northern Shores.

This is a very important event. It's an annual event. It is a very important event to our agricultural communities across the province. In the fall of 2009 we all look forward to participating in the plowing match, which is the first one to be held in the north, in Temiskaming. It will be a big boost for the entire northern community. It's expected to draw approximately 80,000 visitors and generate more than \$20 million for the local economy. As always, our government will have a significant presence, and I know that many members from all parties attend the plowing match and are delighted to be participants.

This is the 93rd—many members will not be aware—annual plowing match. It's the largest outdoor farm and rural living show in Canada. It hosts more than 600 exhibitors and has 100 acres of what they call the tented city. Last year we were up in Bruce county. In 2006 we were in Peterborough. It's a wonderful event.

Normally the House would not be sitting until later in September or we wouldn't have this type of motion or this requirement to adjourn for two days, but because we have changed the calendar of this Legislature, we are sitting earlier in September this year and we will require those two days off in order to allow all members from all sides of the House to attend.

I am hopeful that this will not be a lengthy debate today. I am hopeful that all parties will see fit to support this and allow to us to adjourn for those two days in September.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Leeanna Pendergast): Further debate?

M. Gilles Bisson: Premièrement, je veux dire de la part du caucus néo-démocratique qu'on va supporter cette motion. On sait que cet événement, pour les communautés dans la région de Temiskaming, est assez important. Ce n'est pas chaque jour qu'on voit cet événement venir dans le nord de l'Ontario. Comme on le sait, c'est un événement annuel qui est très important pour la communauté agricole, et c'est quelque chose où nous, les députés, avons toujours eu l'occasion d'aller y participer. La leader parlementaire du gouvernement libéral nous dit : « Bien, il faut fermer l'assemblée, parce que c'est ce qu'on fait d'habitude ». Mais je veux dire, pour le record, qu'à beaucoup d'occasions—je le sais comme député ici depuis 20 ans—on a eu des occasions où la chambre a siégé en même temps que ces événements, d'habitude, dans le sud de la province de l'Ontario. On s'organise, comme eux s'organisent, pour nous assurer qu'une partie de nos membres est là pour être capable de participer, parce que l'événement n'est pas seulement d'une journée ; c'est sur une période d'une couple de journées, et d'habitude les caucus NPD, libéral et conservateur s'organisent pour être présents, pour être là pour participer à ces importants événements.

C'est un peu différent cette fois-ci parce qu'on reconnaît que—écoute, moi je le sais ; je demeure à Timmins—Temiskaming est un peu plus loin de Toronto,

comme le sont beaucoup de communautés où on a eu ces événements-là dans le passé. Pour certains députés, s'éloigner au nord de la 401, c'est loin. D'habitude, on embarque dans l'avion ou on prend la route chaque semaine pour monter dans nos comtés, comme M^{me} Monique Smith, qui chaque fin de semaine va à North Bay, moi qui vais à Timmins et puis d'autres qui vont à d'autres places à travers le nord de l'Ontario.

Pour nous autres, c'est normal, mais pour beaucoup de députés c'est un voyage qui est long ; ce n'est pas court, imagine-toi. Il faut embarquer dans l'automobile et il faut monter et, imagine-toi, avec la Honda on aura besoin de mettre tout le bidon de gaz plein. Ils ne sont pas capables de partir avec un demi-« tank » ; ils ont besoin de partir avec le « tank » très plein de gaz parce que c'est plus loin que d'habitude. Imagine-toi : c'est plus d'une couple d'heures. Ils ont même besoin de prendre le dîner en montant parce que c'est plus que cinq, six heures. Donc pour beaucoup de députés je sais que ça va être un stress énorme, aller à Temiskaming pour participer à cet événement, et pour cette raison nous autres on veut accommoder ces députés pour nous assurer que ceux qui se déplacent pour venir au « plowing match » dans le nord de l'Ontario, à Temiskaming, vont avoir l'occasion d'y aller, avoir un dîner en montant, rester dans les hôtels et les restos dans le coin et participer à ces événements qui sont importants.

Nous, les néo-démocrates, étions préparés à accommoder le « plowing match » en disant qu'une partie de nos députés s'arrêteraient ici une journée ; l'autre partie des députés allaient partir la deuxième journée. En d'autres mots, on a accommodé parce que, comme on le sait, c'est important que cette Assemblée siège et traite des questions de la province d'une manière sérieuse. Ce n'est pas seulement la question de la période des questions, mais c'est aussi la question de tous les autres travaux qui sont ici que nous autres avons proposés. On aurait pu accommoder un horaire un peu moins chargé pour être capable d'accommoder les députés qui vont y aller. On décide qu'on veut le faire différemment, et c'est correct. On ne va pas s'obstiner parce qu'à la fin de la journée nous voulons supporter cet événement à Temiskaming ; on sait que c'est important non seulement pour Temiskaming mais aussi pour la communauté agricole.

1650

Moi, je suggère au leader parlementaire, M^{me} Smith— puis je pense qu'elle va trouver ça vraiment intéressant— pour quelle raison ne prend-on pas la période des questions pour la transplanter au « plowing match » ? Imaginez-vous le premier ministre avec tout le cabinet quelque part dans le comté de Temiskaming, préparés à répondre à des questions ; et on pourrait avoir deux jours agricoles où on est capable de répondre aux questions. Premièrement, nous dans l'opposition poserons des questions faisant affaire avec l'économie rurale et avec la question sur ce qui se passe dans l'industrie agricole, et le premier ministre et son cabinet seront directement devant des huit mille qui sont là et qui auront la chance de voir

la période des questions « live » à Temiskaming. Cela aurait été quelque chose d'extraordinaire. Imaginez-vous M^{me} Wynne, capable de répondre aux questions faisant affaire avec l'importance des écoles dans les petites communautés, comme vous le savez, ou supporter les petites écoles dans mon comté, comme d'autres. Vous auriez pu prendre une question des députés comme moi puis montrer pourquoi il est important de supporter les petites écoles.

On aurait pu voir M^{me} Smith et d'autres ministres répondre aux questions qui sont importantes pour les communautés rurales et agricoles de la province de l'Ontario. Moi, je vous propose qu'on ait des discussions durant—

Interjection.

M. Gilles Bisson : On va voir. Comme vous le savez, madame la Présidente, on va finir de siéger la semaine prochaine puis on aura assez de temps de négocier avant le mois de septembre une période des questions au « plowing match ». Je pense que c'est donc innovateur et donc une bonne idée d'avoir une période des questions pour le « plowing match » pour que nous, les députés de l'Assemblée ontarienne, ayons la chance de montrer comment on supporte les communautés rurales et les communautés agricoles de la province de l'Ontario.

Le premier ministre et son cabinet seraient là. On pourrait avoir des tracteurs rouges sur un bord, des tracteurs verts sur mon bord et des tracteurs bleus. Chacun pourrait avoir—

Interjection.

M. Gilles Bisson : On dit « tracteur ». En français canadien on dit « tracteur », okay ?

Hon. Monique M. Smith : —or brown would be good.

M. Gilles Bisson : Ça marche, Monique. C'est correct. On fait du vert des fois quand on est environnementaliste, on fait orange quand c'est nécessaire ; on fait les deux.

Nous autres, on est le parti vert de cette Assemblée. Orange et vert, c'est un peu la même affaire. Imaginez-vous tous les tracteurs sur l'autre bord du champ, avec le premier ministre sur le gros tracteur rouge. On va dire que c'est un Massey Ferguson s'ils bâtiraient encore ici en Ontario. Le restant du cabinet serait sur leurs petits tracteurs et ils seraient préparés à répondre aux questions. Imaginez-vous : on peut avoir quelqu'un qui fait un encan ou quelque chose comme ça qui pourrait être le président de l'Assemblée cette journée-là. M^{me} Horwath, sur son beau petit tracteur vert ou orange, peut poser des questions, avec M. Runciman sur un petit tracteur bleu. Nous autres, les restants, sur nos petits mopeds ou peut-être sur un « ATV » de chaque couleur, on pourrait se mettre dans un champ de Temiskaming pour se poser des questions, et peut-être qu'à Temiskaming, M^{me} Smith, on aura finalement des réponses.

Imaginez-vous donc une période des questions où on aura vraiment des réponses, puis ce ne sont pas que des chansons à répondre, comme on dit en bon français canadien. Donc, avec ce qui va se passer cet automne il faut dire, chacun ici, que c'est un événement qui est

important. On veut s'assurer qu'on fait tout pour démontrer à l'industrie agricole que la Législature de l'Ontario supporte tout ce qu'on peut faire pour être capable de supporter ces initiatives. Ça va donner une chance aux députés de voir eux autres premièrement ce qui se passe dans les terres agricoles du nord de l'Ontario et de causer avec le monde pour voir quelles sont les questions importantes pour cette industrie. Je regarde avec anticipation l'habileté de M. McGuinty sur son Massey Ferguson, et M. Runciman ou le prochain chef et M^{me} Horwath poser des questions dans le champ à Temiskaming sur leur tracteur. Je regarde vers cette opportunité.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Leeanna Pendergast): Further debate?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Certainly, as an urban member, I look forward every year to the plowing match. I look forward to going to Timiskaming. I think it would be quite surprising to transport question period to the plowing match. I'm not sure it would be consistent with the other events at the plowing match. But the plowing match, as it stands, even without question period, is quite a wonderful opportunity for us to experience agriculture and the rural community and issues, so I look forward to it.

I didn't think we had unanimous consent on this motion, but obviously we do, and that's terrific. I look forward to the vote.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Leeanna Pendergast): Further debate?

Ms. Smith, government House leader, has moved government motion 137. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Leeanna Pendergast): Orders of the day.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: Everyone is having a good time this Thursday afternoon.

I move adjournment of the House.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Leeanna Pendergast): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

I heard a no.

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those opposed, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it. Carried.

The House stands adjourned until Monday, June 1, at 10:30 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1656.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

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Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Steve Peters

Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman, Tonia Grannum

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Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins–Baie James	
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Bryant, Michael (LIB)	St. Paul's	
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Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
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Flynn, Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	
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Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Gerretsen, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	Minister of the Environment / Ministre de l'Environnement
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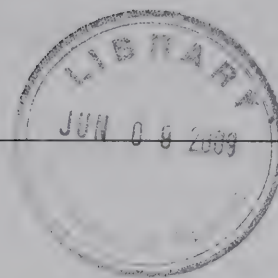
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Première session, 39^e législature

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Monday 1 June 2009

Lundi 1^{er} juin 2009

Speaker
Honourable Steve Peters

Président
L'honorable Steve Peters

Clerk
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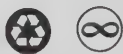
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 1 June 2009

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 1^{er} juin 2009

The House met at 1030.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Good morning. Please remain standing for the Lord's Prayer, followed by a moment of silence for personal thought and inner reflection.

Prayers.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Jim Watson: A student art contest launched Ontario's new greenbelt awards celebrating the fourth anniversary of the world-renowned greenbelt. Ontarians have picked Etobicoke North student Esha Patel's artwork as the winning design from among four finalists and hundreds of entries. I'm very pleased to introduce in the gallery Esha Patel, a very talented grade 2 student at Highfield Junior School. She's in the Legislature, joined by her family: her father, Hitesh, her mother, Archana, and her brother Smit. Congratulations on your beautiful artwork, and thank you for supporting the greenbelt.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: It gives me pleasure to introduce a team of people from Celestica in my riding who raised 4,100 pounds of food and \$3,000—along with everyone else in Celestica, but this is the winning team. They raised the most food and the most money for the Flemingdon food bank in the Flemingdon neighbourhood. I want to just quickly read their names: John Sloan, Muhammad Ijaz, Cherrylyn Roxas, Nicki Lakhani, Ramin Kompani, Marilyn Bond, Mandy Malarczuck is not able to be here, but she's part of the team—Tahir Shakeel, John C. Lee, Clayton Remedios, Amanda Montezer, Anita Jorge-Brion, Myrna Datu, Mike Andrade and Frank Silva. Thank you so much for your generosity.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: I want to welcome to the Legislature the father of one of our pages. The page is Gerrit Wesselink; his father is Gerald, better known as Gerry Wesselink. Welcome, Mr. Wesselink.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The Minister of Tourism.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and a happy Tourism Week to you.

Today I'd like to welcome tourists from Wasilla, Alaska: my cousin, Dick Harren; his sons Wendell, William and Russell; and his father-in-law, Rene Chapelle, who's here from Houston, Texas. They've been to Casa Loma, the Hockey Hall of Fame, the Ontario Science Centre and the CN Tower. They're doing it up right, and we're very pleased. They're not here yet, because it's a little crowd-

ed, but they're on their way in, and we're delighted to have them visiting Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): On behalf of the member for Haldimand-Norfolk and page Eileen Woolley, we'd like welcome her father, Patrick, her brother Edward and her sister Ellena, sitting in the west members' gallery today. Welcome.

On behalf of the Minister of Culture and page Elliott Yee, I'd like to welcome his mother, Sarah, his father, Irv, and his sister, Ruby, sitting in the east members' gallery. Welcome to Queen's Park.

On behalf of the member from Timmins-James Bay and page Kathleen Crump, I'd like to welcome her grandmother, Linda Burke, her grandfather, Terry Burke, and her cousin, Terri-Lynn, sitting in the west members' gallery.

I would like to welcome Anita Ratkovic-Baric, who is my executive assistant in my constituency office. Anita is seated in the Speaker's gallery. Welcome to Queen's Park, Anita.

CORRECTION OF RECORD

Mr. Peter Kormos: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: Last Thursday during third reading debate of Bill 115, An Act to amend the Coroners Act, I was speaking to the absence of certification of forensic pathologists in the province of Ontario. At one point, I referred to pathologists in general, although I subsequently spoke about forensic pathologists.

It's erroneous to suggest that pathologists don't have certification. They, of course, specialize; it's four years of additional study. I would very much ask that that record be corrected, and I'm so very grateful to Dr. Ernest Cutz for bringing that to my attention. He clearly was paying close attention to the debate in the Legislature.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): There being no further introductions, it is now time for oral questions.

ORAL QUESTIONS

ELECTRONIC HEALTH INFORMATION

Mrs. Christine Elliott: My question is for the Minister of Health. Last week, the CEO of eHealth Ontario said that the spending and tendering practices of the agency she runs were appropriate. She defended the secret contracts she handed out with no transparency, saying

they were needed to get “the best and the brightest.” Does the minister agree with Ms. Kramer?

Hon. David Caplan: I want to thank the member for the question.

The investments in eHealth are significant, but I believe they will ultimately result in better patient care and more efficient health care service delivery. I can tell the member that the current leadership at eHealth Ontario is yielding good results, and they are on track to reach our goal of a modernized health care system.

However, although there are costs to conducting business, it's important that taxpayer dollars are always treated responsibly. It's important not just for eHealth, but for all of us who have the privilege of serving Ontarians, including every member of this Legislature. To that end, I have directed the eHealth board to undertake a third-party review to ensure that best management practices are being followed. The board has agreed to do so.

I plan to speak with the Auditor General later this week, when he is back in the country, about his review of eHealth—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: Last week, the minister was quite bullish on this topic, and on Thursday he said he thought that taxpayers were getting good value for their money.

I assume that the minister has acquainted himself with Allaudin Merali, the senior vice-president of corporate services of eHealth Ontario. Mr. Merali is a contractor. He received one of the untendered contracts. He bills the taxpayers \$2,750 per day, some \$60,000 per month.

Does the minister believe that the taxpayers of Ontario are getting good value for their money with this particular contract?

Hon. David Caplan: It is a fact that eHealth is a project-based business that requires expertise from highly skilled technical individuals, and I can assure this member and Ontarians that we are drawing on expertise from around the world to build the best eHealth system for all Ontarians. I can tell the member that we're not alone. Using specialized consultants for large-scale IT initiatives is standard practice for public and private-sector companies around the world.

I know that, as part of its transition plan, eHealth is moving to reduce its reliance on consultants. For example, it's important to note that the percentage of consultants in the overall Smart Systems for Health Agency was higher in the fiscal year started under the previous government, in 2003-04, at 27% of overall expenditure, than it is today, at roughly 16%. We are working hard to bring this—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Final supplementary.

Mrs. Christine Elliott: No one is going to dispute the need to use consultants, but there has to be good value to taxpayers for their money.

It's important to note that in addition to the \$60,000 per month that Mr. Merali was receiving for his fees, he

bills the taxpayers of Ontario an additional \$10,000 to \$15,000 per month in transportation, accommodation and meal costs. In fact in five months, the taxpayers of Ontario, all of the people who are waiting for electronic health records, paid for Mr. Merali to fly 33 times between Toronto and Edmonton. Can the minister please tell us why the taxpayers paid nearly \$24,000 for these flights between Ontario and Alberta?

1040

Hon. David Caplan: I can assure the member opposite and all Ontarians that I have discussed my concerns regarding some of the expenses that have been disclosed with the CEO and with the chair.

However, although there are costs of conducting business, it's important that taxpayer dollars are treated respectfully. This is important not just for eHealth but for all of us, as I said, who have the privilege to serve Ontarians, including those of us here in the Legislature. While it may be allowable, there is the question about whether this is something that ought to be done. That's why I have directed the eHealth board to take on a third party review of best management practices, and in fact the board has agreed and they are following through.

I hold my responsibility, as do all members on this side of the House, of ensuring value for taxpayer dollars, and I'm happy in further questions to be able to outline some of the—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

ELECTRONIC HEALTH INFORMATION

Mrs. Christine Elliott: To the minister: Mr. Merali lives in Alberta. He used to work in Alberta, but he doesn't work there now. Are you familiar with where Mr. Merali used to work?

Hon. David Caplan: The CEO and the board do take on the various individuals. That is not something that, of course, does cross for my approval.

I did mention to the member opposite that I want to speak about some of the milestones and achievements of eHealth Ontario, and it's quite an impressive list. Since September, they have unveiled Ontario's first comprehensive, published eHealth strategy. They've launched a pilot ePrescribing program, the first in Canada, and the pilot begins in Sault Ste. Marie and Collingwood. They are partnering with OntarioMD to roll out electronic medical records in primary care physician offices throughout the province. They've launched the baseline diabetes data initiative to measure the current state of diabetes care in Ontario, providing physicians with information to improve care for their patients. They've established a diagnostic imaging network across Ontario—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I didn't hear that from the minister's answer, but Mr. Merali used to work for Capital Health in Alberta. That organization was repeatedly slammed by the Alberta Auditor General for creative

accounting practices: creating artificial transactions to paint a false picture about finances. The Auditor General said this was done repeatedly. Mr. Merali was the chief financial officer. In August 2008, he stopped working there. Two months later, he showed up at eHealth Ontario, his salary effectively doubling under a secret, untendered contract. Does the minister still agree with Ms. Kramer's assertion that we're paying for the best and the brightest?

Hon. David Caplan: I've always said that it's an expensive undertaking and that we are going to engage the best in the world to be able to drive forward on electronic health care records and on an ambitious eHealth agenda for this province.

Wherever possible, it's my expectation that contracts are tendered in an open and fair competition. The eHealth board made a decision during a transition period to get eHealth moving forward quickly in this regard.

I have directed the eHealth board to undertake, as I've mentioned, a third party review to ensure that best management practices are being followed. The board has agreed to do so.

In addition, I will be following up with the Auditor General of the province of Ontario when he is back in the country tomorrow. I look forward to the AG's recommendations, and I look forward to the results of the review.

I will continue to—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Final supplementary.

Mrs. Christine Elliott: Let's talk about value for taxpayer dollars. Between November and March, Mr. Merali billed the taxpayers nearly \$360,000: \$24,000 for flights between Alberta and Ontario; billing for luxury apartments; receiving \$2,750 a day plus a \$75-a-day stipend, and he still billed for his meals on top of that.

When the minister next gets up, as he already has said, he's going to say, "The Auditor General is investigating and that's all we need." But we know from reports in the Edmonton Journal that the organization to which Mr. Merali previously worked as CFO repeatedly ignored Alberta's Auditor General. So surely the minister must agree that the time has come to have a full airing of this mess at the Standing Committee on Public Accounts. Will you do that?

Hon. David Caplan: I can assure the member that CEO Sarah Kramer is an open and transparent individual and has discussed the issues raised publicly. I've directed, as I've mentioned, the board to undertake a third party review. Of course, an independent officer of this Legislature, the Auditor General of the province of Ontario, is in fact looking into it at the behest of the federal Auditor General, as are counterparts right across the country.

These are not new. I did mention to the member opposite, as early as April 9, that in fact this was the case. The auditor is known for his thoroughness. He is known for the work that he does and for providing good advice to this Legislature. I, of course, will take his comments and

his views and his recommendations under advisement. I will be meeting with the auditor. Frankly, the auditor is out of the country and will be back—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock. We have four question periods left.

TAXATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Acting Premier. Since the McGuinty Liberals announced an 8% tax hike on everything from vitamins to gasoline, I've heard from thousands and thousands of concerned Ontarians. Frustrated, worried and angry everyday Ontarians have sent me faxes, e-mails and letters by the truckload.

Janice from the Red Pine Wilderness Lodge in Haileybury wrote about the \$100 extra in sales taxes that are going to hurt both her and her customers and her small business. Sue, a self-employed worker in Toronto, said, "This is a tough time for myself and many others, and this tax grab will hurt." Why are the McGuinty Liberals tacking 8% on to the bills of everyday Ontarians?

Hon. George Smitherman: I do thank the honourable member for the question. At the time that our government brought our budget forward, we knew that the challenging times were economic and at the heart of everybody's considerations. Accordingly, it was our obligation to bring forward a budget which sought to address the challenges of the times in appropriate measures. The government's budget is designed to do that: to enhance the competitiveness of our jurisdiction and to bring forward a wide array of tax cuts. The honourable member speaks to small business. That's why one of the elements of our government's budget was a reduction in tax rates for small businesses in recognition that it's necessary to make them more competitive so that they can reach out and find business opportunities. I'm sure that the honourable member did not tell that to the small business operator from Haileybury.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: That's not Janice's opinion, by far. Kevin from Roslin writes this: "I ask you, plead with you, not to do this.... We just can't afford it." Rhetorically, Bob from Kanata asks, "Is this your idea of how to help us?" Catherine, a Toronto realtor, says that the HST will "hurt the resale home market and prolong the housing industry's recovery from the current economic downturn." Greg from Owen Sound writes this: "I encourage you to revisit this proposed tax."

When will this government finally listen to Ontarians and abandon its 8% tax grab?

Hon. George Smitherman: I do think that it's important to recognize that in challenging times like these, it's the responsibility of a jurisdiction to ensure that it is able to compete for the business opportunities of the future. This is at the heart of the circumstances in all Ontario households: They need opportunities to work, and our province is taking the steps forward to ensure that we're competitive in that regard. That's why, alongside

the initiative that substantially streamlines the implication for business in terms of the paperwork associated with dealing with taxes etc., are tax reductions all across the landscape. Ninety-three per cent of the people in the province of Ontario on the first \$38,000 dollars of income will reap the benefit in terms of reduced taxes, and thousands and thousands of Ontarians will actually be removed from the tax rolls. All is part and parcel of the efforts to make our jurisdiction more competitive and make sure that people in the province of Ontario have the opportunity for good jobs.

1050

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Worried about the HST's impacts, Bert from Innisfil wants you to maintain the existing PST exemptions. Debra from Ottawa weighs in: "Increased sales tax will discourage prospective new business, not encourage it." This from Donald from Toronto: "This will result in thousands of dollars of increased tax burden per year to Ontario families."

These are Ontarians who work hard and play by the rules. At the very time that their families are concerned and worried about job losses, about their savings and pensions, why is the McGuinty government, why are these Liberals, making the basics cost 8% more for these families?

Hon. George Smitherman: In addition to having missed, I'm certain, the opportunity on the honourable member's part to explain to those people who were in touch that there are tax reductions all across the piece, I rather suspect that in conversation with Bert from Innisfil, the honourable member also didn't take the opportunity to mention that they propose an increase in these taxes. That is the record that they have. They've been looking to increase these taxes.

At the heart of it, what we seek to create is a more competitive Ontario where businesses small and large will reap the benefit associated with lower overall taxes. These are opportunities to pass through the reductions in cost that are embedded in many products to those people who are purchasing those services.

We know that this has been viewed by many as the single largest initiative that we can take to enhance the competitiveness of the province of Ontario, to the benefit of those who wish to be employed.

ELECTRONIC HEALTH INFORMATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: To the Acting Premier: We're learning more and more each day about the outrageous spending at eHealth Ontario. In less than one year, the agency has burned through \$34 million on high-paid, high-flying consultants. This includes \$75,000 in salary and expenses to an Edmonton-based consultant who worked for 23 and a half days. It includes thousands of dollars in cab rides, and \$7,000 speeches. Does the McGuinty government condone this flagrant disregard of taxpayers' dollars?

Hon. George Smitherman: To the Minister of Health.

Hon. David Caplan: I did comment earlier. I think it's important that all members understand—

Mr. Peter Kormos: David screwed up big time.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd just ask the honourable member from Welland to perhaps choose different words.

Hon. David Caplan: The investments in eHealth are significant but will ultimately yield better patient care.

On Thursday, the critic from your party, I say to the leader of the third party, was saying that we need to accelerate the pace of our investment in driving out on an eHealth agenda, and I quite agree. In fact, I will indicate in later supplementaries—because I do believe that the leadership at eHealth is yielding good results and is on track to reach our goal of a modernized health care system, one that brings health care practitioners together, one that has better patient safety, and ultimately, better patient results.

However, although there is a cost of conducting business, it's important that taxpayer dollars be responsibly treated. It's not just important for eHealth but for all of us. That's why I had—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Good results? Perhaps this minister doesn't understand the seriousness of this fiasco. The McGuinty government is allowing emergency room closures in communities like Fort Erie; it's presiding over a growing health crisis in the 905—all of this as hundreds of millions of dollars go down the drain at eHealth Ontario and its earlier incarnation.

Rather than waste this money on \$7,000 speeches, you should be spending it on health care. That's what we believe on this side of the House.

Why is the McGuinty government wasting millions and millions of health care dollars that should be spent on the health care of all Ontarians?

Hon. David Caplan: On Thursday, the critic for the third party was urging that we implement eHealth. Now the leader of the third party is saying we should not. From one day to the next, it changes over there.

So far, what we've been able to see is the establishment of a diagnostic imaging network across Ontario so that images are available digitally, resulting in faster turnaround times for patients.

We've developed an electronic system to store images from hospital CT scanners for neurosurgical and neurological care, to improve patient access to care.

We've brought in the managed drug profile viewer, which is in use to help all hospital emergency departments across Ontario, to help health care providers quickly identify and prevent harmful drug reactions and provide more informed emergency care.

The premise of the member's question, by the way, is incorrect. Resources for Ontario's hospitals are only increasing in this province, contrary—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: This minister should get around to implementing eHealth instead of pouring precious taxpayers' health dollars down the drain.

Ontarians have a good reason to be fed up. Their health care system is in crisis. With cutbacks and increased privatization, communities are forced to make due with less. Despite the evidence that there are serious problems, starting with out-of-control spending at eHealth Ontario, this minister thinks everything is well and good. This minister is either powerless to stop it or he is incapable of managing his ministry. When is he going to resign?

Hon. David Caplan: I disagree with the member. Ontario's health care is on solid footing. In fact, stakeholders in health care are saying they are pleased to see the commitment of this government, at least members on this side of the House, for providing enhanced resources in health care. In fact, eHealth is on track to deliver health records to all Ontarians by 2015 and is making progress in other areas.

ePrescribing: We've launched a first of its kind in Canada, a pilot program in two communities, in Collingwood and in Sault Ste. Marie, connecting up pharmacy with primary care. Over 3,000 doctors have or will soon have electronic medical records on their desks, serving in the order of four million Ontarians. All diabetic patients in Ontario will have an electronic health record by 2012. Full records for all Ontarians will be in place by 2015 or earlier. That's the commitment of this government—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

STUDENT SAFETY

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: To the Minister of Education: Today you will pass yet another piece of feel-good legislation. Our party offered many amendments to Bill 157 that would require mandatory reporting by principals of student-on-student assault in hopes that it would minimize the risk of children being victimized again and again after the initial assault.

Even your stakeholders agree, Minister. The case at C.W. Jefferys, where the principals did not report a gang sexual assault for months and months, has sent a strong message to school administrators that there are no consequences for not reporting and that no one is accountable. The Ontario Principals' Council felt the importance of a press release in which they put it simply: "The fact remains that there is no legislative duty for a principal or vice-principal to report student-on-student incidents...."

Minister, will you commit to introducing a new bill in the fall to replace—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Minister?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: In fact, the member opposite knows full well that the legislation we have introduced actually implements many of the things that the member opposite was calling for.

She was concerned because there was not in legislation a mandatory requirement for teachers to report

serious incidents to principals. That is ensconced in this legislation. And I think the member opposite would agree that we have gone some way down the road to make sure that principals then are required to report to parents of victims. Principals are already required to report to the parents of perpetrators when there are serious incidents, and now they will be required to report to the parents of victims, except when they believe that there is the possibility of harm to that student.

I think that the member opposite has to understand that what makes a school safe is all of the adults working together. This legislation will take us further down the road in terms—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: Minister, I repeat: A gang rape was not reported. These people have gone without any consequences. We have faith in doctors, police officers and lawyers, and they have clear legislation that describes the procedures they have to follow. Why should principals be different?

Your appeals were doomed to fail. The crown argued in its appeal that the non-reporting of the incident was a continuing offence and it did not end at the time of the alleged assault.

Minister, why won't you give principals clear legislative requirements? Why did you press charges in the first place, and why did you file a hopeless appeal? Isn't it because your appeal and your bill are just an attempt to appear to be doing something right?

I ask again: Will you commit to introducing a new bill in the fall to replace this inadequate legislation and finally bring mandatory reporting?

1100

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: There are already requirements in place, and when there is professional misconduct, the Ontario College of Teachers takes action. That is already in place. There is already a criminal justice system that takes action when charges are laid.

I think the member opposite has to remember that the school system does not operate in isolation from all of the other statutes and all of the other systems that are already in place. For the school system to attempt to be the criminal justice system makes no sense.

What we have done is fill in gaps in reporting, which we consulted on across the province. My parliamentary assistant, the member for Guelph, went around the province and talked to educators. We have made it clear when teachers must report to principals. The other statutes that are already in place require further reporting—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

COURT REPORTERS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Attorney General. Court reporters are skilful and do some of the most important work in the justice system. They are in our courts to record the proceedings, and further, are

mandated a very specialized task: to produce accurate transcripts of those very proceedings at home on their own time. Now, strangely, the McGuinty government is moving on a system of sweatshop justice here in Ontario. Why is the Attorney General proposing to have transcripts prepared in regional centres by people who have never actually been in court to witness the proceedings?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: The member is quite right when she says our court reporters do a very important and a very good job throughout the province of Ontario—and have for many years. That's certainly been my experience as a practising lawyer.

She's quite right that we want to do whatever is necessary to support those court reporters. She knows that there were some labour grievances that were pursued, and as a result of the labour grievances, it was necessary for the government to look at ways of addressing them. The proposal that she outlined was one of the proposals. It is not the proposal that we're pursuing. We're going to make sure that we have the appropriate means of supporting the important work that our court reporters do, the important work of transcript production, and we'll be working through the labour relations process with OPSEU to make sure that we have the appropriate method in the future.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: OPSEU represents 659 court reporters, and it's fighting the McGuinty government's proposal to build these sweatshops for the production of court records. What I want to understand very clearly from this Attorney General is, are you going to guarantee that your solution is going to keep every one of those court reporters who are in the courts employed doing the transcripts, ensure that not a single one of them is going to lose hours and maintain wages the way they should be maintained?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: I think what the member will know is that the court reporters were doing their work in a certain way for many years. As a result of grievances that some of the court reporters pursued, a decision was made that has caused the government to sit down with OPSEU and say, "We need to address this decision," a decision which would suggest that some changes are necessary. Now we're working with OPSEU to address the result of that labour proceeding. We will be working very closely with our labour relations partners to address the result of that grievance that was successfully pursued by the union members. We'll be addressing that and supporting the court reporters and the court reporting system as they need to be, in the interests of justice.

ADOPTION DISCLOSURE

Ms. Laurel C. Broten: My question is for the Minister of Community and Social Services. Minister, today adoption records in Ontario will be opened for the first time in our history. Although there is much excitement about the steps our government has taken, I have

also recently read and heard the concerns raised by individuals across Ontario, in the media and otherwise. According to your ministry's website, there are just over 3,700 disclosure vetoes that were filed, meaning 3,700 of 250,000 Ontarians have chosen to keep their information private. My question to the minister is, what has the ministry done to ensure that adopted Ontarians are aware of today's news and understand the new rules?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: I would like to thank the member for her excellent question. Yes, adoption files will be open today. In preparation for that, my ministry has launched a very extensive advertising campaign in three phases to ensure that people know about the change in the adoption legislation. These ads were conducted in every province and territory in Canada and across the United States, with additional advertising in Arizona, California and Florida.

We have also sent out information packages to a variety of interest groups and adoption partners at every stage of our implementation. Furthermore, our website has been updated constantly, and from September 2008 to April 2009, we have had over 47,000 unique visitors and almost 60,000 hits on the adoption page of our website.

Ontarians have been engaged, and my ministry has fulfilled its duty to communicate—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Ms. Laurel C. Broten: While it's absolutely crucial to ensure that adopted Ontarians are prepared for the changes coming into force, there may also be those who have given up a child for adoption and who are now anxious seniors, and others in Ontario, who may need some extra reassurance. Included in this group may be mothers who perhaps gave up their child decades ago in secret, only to be concerned today with having their information released.

Minister, when it comes to vetoes, what happens to individuals who just recently sent in those vetoes? Is there a backlog in the system, and if so, how will the privacy of these individuals be protected?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: That is very, very important. What I want to tell the House and Ontarians in general is that in order for a disclosure veto to be effective, it must be registered before an application for disclosure of information is processed. Applications for a disclosure veto have been available to the public since September 1, 2008.

The ORG has told us that there is no backlog with the applications as of May 26, so before any information is disclosed, all the application vetoes will be processed. Additionally, if a sudden wave of veto applications arrives later this week, they will be processed before any information goes out to requesters.

ELECTRONIC HEALTH INFORMATION

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: My question is again to the Minister of Health and has to do with the offensive

misuse of tax dollars at eHealth, an agency that he and his colleagues are responsible for. Sarah Kramer, the CEO of eHealth, has been unrepentant. As a matter of fact, she fully approves of her manipulation of the rules in order to give contracts to her consultant friends and fatten their bank accounts with scarce tax dollars.

Minister, you stood up here last week and again this week defending the practices of what I would describe as a rogue agency; an agency out of control, with no respect whatsoever for tax dollars. Your Premier says he's concerned, but I think you're trying to have it both ways. If there is legitimate concern, will you stop defending this agency and the CEO and refer this matter to the public accounts committee, if you have genuine and real concerns?

Hon. David Caplan: The Premier and I share the same concern about the appropriate use of taxpayer dollars. That's precisely why I met this weekend with Dr. Alan Hudson, the chair of the board, and directed the board to undertake a third-party review of the management practices at eHealth Ontario. In fact, the board has met and they are moving in that fashion.

As I also mentioned earlier in a supplementary, Mr. McCarter, the Auditor General for Ontario, is out of the province at the present time, but upon his return I will be meeting, or at the very least speaking, with him about the review he has undertaken related to eHealth and its legacy and predecessor companies.

I don't think the member should be under any illusion. I disagree with the rhetoric he uses, and I understand the partisan nature of this place, but I can assure the member that—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: You don't need a third-party review to know that something smells here and heads should roll. I have a receipt filed by Allaudin Merali, the \$75,000-a-month man we heard about earlier, for a six-night stay at the Royal York Hotel at a cost to taxpayers a little under \$2,100. There's a charge on this every day of his stay at the hotel for a \$15 drink at the exclusive Gold Lounge.

Minister, without obfuscating, can you tell Ontarians in places like Guelph and Goderich who've lost their jobs, who can barely afford to put food on the table, why they need to pay for a \$15 nightcap for your Liberal consultant?

1110

Hon. David Caplan: I certainly regret the rhetoric of the member opposite.

I have informed this House that I have discussed my concern regarding the expenses that have been disclosed with the CEO and with the chair. While these expenses may be allowable, I've reminded them that it's not a question of "can," but a question of "should." While there are costs of doing business, it's important that taxpayer dollars are respected. It's important not just for eHealth but for all of us, as I say, who have the privilege

to serve Ontarians, including every member of this Legislature.

I've directed the board of eHealth to take on a third party review. I will be in conversation with the Auditor General, an independent officer of this Legislature who has done a great service for the people of Ontario, who is well known for his thoroughness and for his professionalism. He will undertake that review, will have recommendations, will—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

DRIVER LICENCES

Mr. Peter Tabuns: To the Minister of Transportation: Ontario's Information and Privacy Commissioner has called on the government to include an on-off switch on the new enhanced driver's licence to protect the personal information of Ontarians. Why is the McGuinty government putting Ontarians' privacy and security at risk by ignoring the commissioner's advice?

Hon. James J. Bradley: I can say that we consulted extensively with the privacy commissioner while developing the licence. The member has expressed, I think, in committee some concerns about this. There was consultation with the Privacy Commissioner of Canada, but our ministry worked very carefully and very closely with the privacy commissioner of Ontario, who provided us with advice all along. We found that advice was very good, and we implemented as much as we could to alleviate some of the concerns that the commissioner had expressed initially. By the time we had finally developed the enhanced security driver's licence, most of the concerns had been addressed. We continue to work with the privacy commissioner to address any further concerns that might be present.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Minister, the reality is that there are a lot of recommendations that were made by the privacy commissioner that came forward as amendments to that bill that were ignored.

You've talked in the past about putting a sleeve on this licence to protect people, to protect their privacy. That sleeve is not adequate to protect people and their privacy from widespread sharing of their personal information, to protect them from being tracked.

You know that other jurisdictions in Canada have backed off on this because of concerns about expense and privacy.

The privacy commissioner is asking you to protect the privacy and security of Ontarians. Why are you ignoring the privacy commissioner's direct advice on this?

Hon. James J. Bradley: You know how people always get up and say, "Nothing could be further from the truth"? That's true, nothing could be further from the truth. I just said we've worked with the privacy commissioner all along.

He mentions the sleeve, for instance. Because one person writes an article in a newspaper that says the sleeve is

not adequate, that doesn't mean the sleeve is not adequate.

You will know that the information that is provided at the border is only a number that is required by the Department of Homeland Security.

That obviously has not changed the mind of the NDP government of Manitoba. Your fellow travellers who rule in Manitoba continue to have enhanced security driver licences available.

The interesting thing is, you demand these documents for people to cross the border, you say we should produce them, and when we do produce them you get up and criticize after—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

TOURISM

Mrs. Carol Mitchell: My question is for the Minister of Tourism. Summer is just around the corner and children will soon be out of school. I know as a parent that it can be very difficult and a challenge to find fun, innovative and exciting ways to keep our children entertained during this time. I also know that family outings can be expensive and that now, more than ever, Ontarians are looking to spend their hard-earned dollars wisely, while enjoying the many locations and attractions that this province has to offer, including Ontario's west coast in the riding of Huron-Bruce.

Can the Minister of Tourism outline any programs that her ministry is offering which may help with the cost of family outings this summer?

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I'd like to thank my colleague for the question today. It is Tourism Week. We're very excited to be celebrating and highlighting the great festivals, events and attractions that our province has to offer.

To answer the member's question, my ministry, in partnership with the Ministry of Culture, has a program that makes travel affordable for Ontario families. It's called the Fun Pass. It allows children 14 years of age and under to attend Ontario's tourism and cultural agencies this summer for free when accompanied by an adult. It represents a potential savings for Ontario families of \$120. This program, instituted under our government, will provide more than 1.5 million passes to children under 14 this year. We distribute it through the schools so that children across the province have access to these passes and can use them with their families.

It includes admissions to attractions such as Science North, Fort William in Thunder Bay, Sainte-Marie among the Hurons, Discovery Harbour in Penetanguishene, Ontario Place—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mrs. Carol Mitchell: I recall hearing of these passes from previous years and I know it's something that I have personally taken advantage of with my family. I know that my constituents really do enjoy them. It's an

affordable way to see our great provincial attractions with your family.

In Huron-Bruce, we certainly know something about tourism. My riding is host to so many public beaches; to name a few, Kincardine, Port Elgin, Goderich, Bayfield and Grand Bend. We feature local parks and many other attractions. It's important to get people out to these and many other locations in the province. It helps stimulate our local economies and it also provides very memorable summer fun for parents and their children alike.

Minister, could you explain why you feel that such programs are so important, particularly in these difficult economic times?

Hon. Monique M. Smith: Again, to the member for Huron-Bruce, thank you for the great question. Certainly your region of the province has some great attractions, wonderful beaches and lots to do for families across Ontario and from outside Ontario. My family from Alaska is now in the House, so a shout-out to them, the Harrens from Alaska who are visiting and taking advantage of all Ontario has to offer.

The members may be interested to know that approximately 80% of Ontario tourism is made up of Ontarians. We're working hard to encourage our fellow Ontarians to spend their scarce vacation dollars here in Ontario through a "stay-cation." We have developed our popular There's No Place Like This ad campaign. Our most recent edition is now playing, featuring singer-songwriter Justin Hines. It's a lovely ad. We have seen success through this ad with a 5% increase in domestic tourism since 2007. We've also invested over \$25 million since 2006 through Celebrate Ontario to enhance our festivals and events. This year, with \$11 million, we're supporting 224 festivals—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

ELECTRONIC HEALTH INFORMATION

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: Back to the Minister of Health and about his rogue agency eHealth and their arrogant CEO, who is telling taxpayers to eat cake: Minister, your defence of this is unconscionable. You have never stood in this place and condemned the spending practices of this agency, and it's a reflection on you and your competence in the job. You're sending a message to every agency of this government: "The culture of entitlement is alive and well in this Liberal government. Go for it."

We just got an e-mail here that eHealth Ontario last night—just last night—held a lavish reception in Quebec City for 850 people, including drinks. Can you confirm that?

Hon. David Caplan: First of all, I reject the premise of the member's question. I have said repeatedly in this House that I and the Premier have concerns about the kinds of expense claims that have come to light. That is precisely why I have directed the board of eHealth Ontario to undertake a third party review. That's why I've taken the step to engage the Auditor General of the

province of Ontario in the review that he is doing and that is ongoing.

1120

I know that the results the agency is achieving are good results, that they are on track to reach our goals of a more modern health care system. I think all the members of this House would want to share in having an eHealth system that connects patients better, that enables better patient safety and a more efficient health care system, things like a diabetes registry and ePrescribing—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: That's a double-D answer—depressing drivel. Really, we've asked you very specific questions.

We have hundreds of thousands of people in this province who have lost their jobs. The province is facing unprecedented economic challenges. People don't know where they're going to be tomorrow, let alone a year or two from now. Their pensions are faltering. People are genuinely concerned, but you're standing up here day after day, every question, defending the unconscionable.

This agency is wasting scarce tax dollars. Minister, take a look at the offensive, offensive history of this agency and the arrogance of its CEO in her public proclamations. You have not condemned her. I ask you, why are you standing up here day after day, defending this rogue agency?

Hon. David Caplan: This government has outlined a very ambitious and important delivery for eHealth initiatives. In fact, the conference that the member offered earlier is a national conference, not one that is put on by eHealth. Unfortunately, I think this is the problem when members opposite get a little carried away in their rhetoric. That's why we've asked a third party to come in and review financial controls and management practices. That's why the Auditor General, an independent officer of this Legislature, is in fact in place, doing the appropriate review. I'm surprised that the member opposite doesn't have confidence in the Auditor General, given the thorough and excellent work he has done on behalf of Ontario taxpayers in this province.

I have tremendous confidence in Mr. McCarter and his team. I know this member showed disdain for auditors in the past. He's disagreed with the Auditor—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

Mr. Rosario Marchese: My question is to the Minister of Education. The Ontario Public School Boards' Association knew you were considering greater access to information to support school administrators and teaching staff to strengthen school improvement plans. However, OPSBA, and I quote, did not "envision the data assembled for this purpose would be used in the context of the school information finder site."

We can't find a single stakeholder group who supports the inclusion of statistics about income, education level

and recent immigration on your website. Minister, who were you listening to when you set up this site?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: We were listening to people who said that the kinds of rankings that are done by the C.D. Howe Institute and the Fraser Institute are overly simplistic. They do not show a fleshed-out profile of schools. If we're going to provide information to the community, to principals, to parents and to community members, then we should have a profile of schools that shows more about a school than just test scores, because that's not enough to get a full picture of what a school is about.

As the member opposite knows, I'm very aware that there are some stakeholders who are concerned about the school information finder, which is why we have set up a consultation process. We're going to be having some round table conversations about what more information could be on that school information finder, so that the profiles of schools would be as complete as they need to be.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Minister, it's clear that you, the Premier and maybe the C.D. Howe Institute obviously think there is an appetite for this kind of information. But the Colour of Poverty Campaign has made the following statement on behalf of numerous community, multicultural and immigrant organizations it represents, and they say, "As it is currently designed, the school information finder has the effect—if not the intent—of promoting segregation and undermining the values of inclusion and equity that are fundamental to the public education system in Ontario."

The information on this website, I tell you, is odious. When are you going to remove it?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I think the salient phrase that the member opposite used is, "As it is currently designed." I've already said that we're going to be talking with folks who have concerns about this tool, and we're going to be talking about what more or different information should be on it.

But I have to say, as recently as this past Saturday I met with a group of parents at a town hall in Pickering with the member for Ajax-Pickering, and we had a conversation about the kinds of information that parents might want to get. One parent raised a comment about fundraising. She said, "We have this policy at our school, but I'm not sure what's done in other contexts. Maybe that's the kind of information that should be available to people school by school."

That's the conversation we're going to have with stakeholders. I know that with the advice of the folks who are close to these issues on the ground, in our school communities, we'll get it right.

GREENBELT

Mr. Shafiq Qadri: Ma question est pour le ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement, the honourable Jim Watson. One of our government's proudest accomplishments was the creation of the greenbelt around

Toronto. It is, as you know, a 1.8-million-acre stretch of land approximately the size of Prince Edward Island. Of course, many of my constituents enjoy spending time with their families out relaxing and exploring the vast agricultural land and green spaces we have protected here in Ontario forever.

In 2010, we will be celebrating the fifth anniversary of the greenbelt, and part of the lead-up to that was the creation of the I Love Greenbelt Awards. I also understand that an art contest was launched to choose the design for the awards.

Minister, would you be able to inform this House about the art contest and about the winning design, especially as it involves some of the irreplaceable constituents of the great riding of Etobicoke North?

Hon. Jim Watson: It's with great pleasure that I inform the House about the winner of that contest that the honourable member spoke about. Her name is Esha Patel, and she is a student in Etobicoke from the member's riding. She is with us here today in the gallery. She's a grade 2 student.

We had submissions from hundreds of students across Ontario who participated in the contest. I had the pleasure of reviewing many of the great works of art that came from students from all parts of Ontario. I have to say that our selection panel had a really tough time because of the quality of the artwork, but Esha's work was exceptional, and we congratulate her very much. Our youth have truly illustrated that the greenbelt is a green space that provides us with clean air, with water and with great local food.

Again, our sincere congratulations to Esha.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: I join with you in congratulating the Patel family, in particular Esha, on the successful entry to this contest. It is, as the minister has just said, truly a great way to illustrate all that the greenbelt has to offer.

The greenbelt is not only a great way to protect the environment around us, but of course there are a number of related economic benefits. For example, the David Suzuki Foundation estimates that ecological services and benefits provided by the greenbelt are valued at approximately \$2.6 billion a year. That's the approximate cost of eight million residents in the greater Golden Horseshoe; they would have to pay for clean water, scrub emissions going into the air and artificially pollinate crops.

Minister, given the success of the greenbelt, what further steps does our government plan, considering future growth?

Hon. Jim Watson: Growing the greenbelt is an opportunity to protect areas outside the existing greenbelt. Last year we put in place criteria, after extensive public consultation, that would consider requests from municipalities to grow the greenbelt. But we won't do this alone or in isolation. Any requests to amend the greenbelt plan will be carefully considered with input from municipalities; the Greenbelt Council, which does such a great job

advising me; aboriginal communities; and the greater public.

A request to grow the greenbelt must address six criteria. They must: come from a single-tier or upper-tier government that is supported by a council resolution; increase the size of the greenbelt; achieve the vision and meet at least one goal of the greenbelt plan; areas must include a natural heritage agriculture or water resource system of a type consistent with the greenbelt plan; complement other provincial policies; and they must complement the growth plan for the greater Golden Horseshoe area.

ELECTRONIC HEALTH INFORMATION

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: Back to the Minister of Health about this out-of-control agency, eHealth, and the clearly out-of-control CEO. Minister, you've had an opportunity now to confirm if indeed the e-mail we received was accurate about eHealth Ontario holding a lavish reception in Quebec City for 850 people. If you can confirm that, I would suggest that if this is accurate, in the midst of a controversy over extravagant misuse of tax dollars by this agency, this would justify the immediate dismissal of the head of that agency. Would you agree?

1130

Hon. David Caplan: When I look at the leadership of the agency, I look at what the results are that they're achieving. I can tell the member opposite that the leadership at eHealth is yielding good results for Ontarians and for Ontario patients. They are on track to reach our goal of a modern health care system.

It's regrettable that when the member and his colleagues served on this side of the House, they set up the Smart Systems for Health Agency and gave it the wrong mandate. They provided it with the wrong direction.

It took my predecessor colleague, Minister Smitherman, to order an operational review. Their operational review said that we needed to do something different in order to be able to drive forward on an ambitious goal and agenda. The accomplishments of this agency since September have been in line with that ambitious strategy to drive forward on ePrescribing, to drive forward on a diabetes registry, to have—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: Talk about rubbing it in the face of hard-pressed taxpayers and the unemployed in this province, the people who are really concerned about their future and their kids' future.

Interjection: They don't care.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: Obviously this CEO doesn't care, the agency doesn't care, and the minister stands up and fails—every time we ask him a question or the other opposition party asks him a question—to condemn the activities of this agency. He thinks that a \$15-a-night cocktail, paid for by the taxpayers, is appropriate when this man is making close to \$3,000 a day from Ontario taxpayers, pulling an extra \$75 a day for meals

on top of that and flying first class back and forth to Alberta at taxpayers' expense.

All these unending expenditures condoned by the CEO, who is the most arrogant bureaucrat we've seen in many a moon, and this minister is standing up—Minister, if you continue this, clearly Ms. Kramer isn't the only one who has to go; you have to go.

Hon. David Caplan: I disagree with the premise of the member's question—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Minister?

Hon. David Caplan: I disagree with the premise of the question. I can tell you that I have repeatedly in this House, as has the Premier, talked about the need to be able to ensure that taxpayers' dollars are used wisely and that they are driving toward an ambitious eHealth agenda, an ambitious plan that will serve the needs of Ontario patients. Unfortunately and regrettably, that did not happen under a previous government, but we have taken steps to be able to correct that.

We now have in place Ontario's first-ever eHealth strategy. That is directing the kind of investment—like an ePrescribing regime, a diabetes registry, an electronic health record—that we had committed to Ontarians, by 2015, and earlier if we possibly can.

I do believe that I have had that conversation with the board and with the CEO about the need to respect taxpayer dollars. That's why I've asked a third party to review the management—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

RETIREMENT HOMES

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour la ministre responsable des personnes âgées.

On November 6 last year, I asked this minister about her government's progress in fulfilling the McGuinty election campaign promise to regulate retirement homes. Minister Carroll told me that she was quite pleased with her government's progress and that something would be announced in the months ahead.

Well, it has been seven months and we still haven't heard anything. Can the minister explain what happened to this promise?

Hon. M. Aileen Carroll: I'm delighted to reply to my colleague from across the way.

We continue to be committed to the regulation of retirement homes. The Minister of Health and myself, our team and our departments are working closely on this project. I'm confident of the progress that we have achieved to date, feeling very positive of the direction in which we're going, and we'll be looking forward to an opportunity to share that news in the very early future.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

M^{me} France Gélinas: Well, this was the exact same response I got in November, except that now it's "the very near future." It used to be "the near future."

With the growing needs of Ontario seniors and the crisis in the alternative level of care patients, retirement

homes are being used to ease the burden on health care facilities. What's happening is that hospitals are actually discharging clients directly into retirement homes. Yet retirement homes are not health care facilities. There are no regulations speculating anything about patient care, staff resources—none of that is there in retirement homes. This is a disaster waiting for a time to happen, and God knows that we have had our fair share of tragic situations. Why is this government dragging its heels in regulating these homes when they're so desperately needed now?

Hon. M. Aileen Carroll: While I appreciate the honourable member's concern about time, I think it's far more important that we get this right. I'm not concerned about whether I use "future" or "near future." I don't think that is the major priority here, and I think it's rather disingenuous to imply that we have Wild West kind of retirement homes. We do not. We are already, within many different aspects of legislation, regulating aspects in the same way that we regulate other facilities, such as accommodation and food. The Ontario building and fire codes and the Health Protection and Promotion Act apply to retirement homes just as they apply to long-term care. In addition, we fund many different dimensions. We've had consultations. We are dedicated to getting this right. We're well aware of the situation described by my honourable colleague and we are—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question?

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: My question is to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. In these times of global economic uncertainty and transition there is much reflection on the nature and direction of our economy. How do we as a government and as a people best prepare Ontario to be a leader in the new economic order that will be upon us in short order? In these tough times for the workers and businesses of our province, the people of Ontario, Canada and many other nations see an opportunity in all the bleakness, an opportunity to couple two great policy aims to kick-start economic output through public investment in major stimulus projects and to use that mandate to make good investments in smart, strategic and immediate projects that will pay off now and pay off later.

A big part of our economic future hinges on having a trained and nimble workforce that can respond to the new knowledge- and skills-based challenges of the 21st century. What is our government doing to ensure that Ontario's campuses have the best learning facilities possible?

Hon. John Milloy: Last week I was very proud, along with my colleague the Minister of Energy and Infrastructure, to announce through our co-operation with the federal government \$1.5 billion for infrastructure projects in Ontario's colleges and universities. The member who asked the question is obviously from the Ottawa area. I'd

just like to outline some of these investments for his part of the province: a new waterfront building at Carleton University, which will house a new faculty of public affairs; \$80 million for Vanier Hall at the University of Ottawa; Algonquin College is moving ahead with their environmental demonstration centre for the construction trade, as well as renewing their Perth campus; finally, \$26 million dollars for La Cité collégiale to build a new 911 institute which will offer emergency services training in French. All these projects are shovel-ready, and we—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. The time for question period has ended.

DEFERRED VOTES

EDUCATION AMENDMENT ACT (KEEPING OUR KIDS SAFE AT SCHOOL), 2009

LOI DE 2009 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR L'ÉDUCATION (SÉCURITÉ DE NOS ENFANTS À L'ÉCOLE)

Deferred vote on the motion for third reading of Bill 157, An Act to amend the Education Act / Projet de loi 157, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'éducation.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1139 to 1144.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): All in favour will rise one at a time and be recorded by the Clerk.

Ayes

Albanese, Laura
Arthurs, Wayne
Bartolucci, Rick
Bentley, Christopher
Bradley, James J.
Brotten, Laurel C.
Brown, Michael A.
Bryant, Michael
Caplan, David
Chan, Michael
Colle, Mike
Crozier, Bruce
Delaney, Bob
Dickson, Joe
Dombrowsky, Leona
Duguid, Brad
Flynn, Kevin Daniel
Fonseca, Peter

Gélinas, France
Gravelle, Michael
Hoy, Pat
Jaczek, Helena
Jeffrey, Linda
Johnson, Rick
Kormos, Peter
Kwinter, Monte
Lalonde, Jean-Marc
Levac, Dave
Marchese, Rosario
Matthews, Deborah
Mauro, Bill
McMeekin, Ted
McNeely, Phil
Meilleur, Madeleine
Milloy, John
Moridi, Reza

Naqvi, Yasir
Phillips, Gerry
Prue, Michael
Qaadri, Shafiq
Ramsay, David
Rinaldi, Lou
Sandals, Liz
Sergio, Mario
Smith, Monique
Smitheman, George
Sorbara, Greg
Sousa, Charles
Takhar, Harinder S.
Van Bommel, Maria
Watson, Jim
Wilkinson, John
Wynne, Kathleen O.
Zimmer, David

Nays

Arnott, Ted
Bailey, Robert
Barrett, Toby
Chudleigh, Ted
Elliott, Christine
Hardeman, Ernie

Jones, Sylvia
MacLeod, Lisa
Miller, Norm
Munro, Julia
O'Toole, John
Ouellette, Jerry J.

Runciman, Robert W.
Savoline, Joyce
Shurman, Peter
Sterling, Norman W.
Witmer, Elizabeth
Yakubski, John

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 54; the nays are 18.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I declare the motion carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

Third reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): There being no further business, this House stands recessed until 1 p.m.

The House recessed from 1147 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd like to take this opportunity to welcome back Richard Patten, who's sitting in the east members' gallery. Richard represented Ottawa Centre in the 34th, 36th, 37th and 38th Parliaments. Welcome back to Queen's Park, Richard.

Hon. Peter Fonseca: Sitting in the east gallery is the ambassador of Portugal, Pedro de Almeida, and the Consul General of Portugal here in Toronto, Ontario, Dr. Maria Amélia de Paiva.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

WINDREACH FARM

Mr. John O'Toole: An estimated 1,500 visitors will gather at WindReach Farm in Scugog township this month for the farm's 20th anniversary celebration.

WindReach Farm offers individuals with disabilities and/or special needs a place to enjoy farming, nature, outdoor recreation and therapeutic riding. Persons of all ages and abilities share these experiences with family and friends.

WindReach is the vision of founder Alexander J. Mitchell, often called Sandy. Sandy was diagnosed with cerebral palsy, but that hasn't kept him from living life to its fullest, enjoying sports such as skiing, horseback riding and sailing. His values and visions are encouraged at WindReach Farm. They welcome over 20,000 visitors annually and work with nearly 350 community organizations. WindReach provides programs for visitors, as well as work experience, accommodation and therapeutic riding.

The celebration is on Saturday, June 13, and includes sheep herding demonstrations, horse shows, adaptive sports, art, music and rides in a fully accessible hot air balloon, to name just a few of the highlights.

Congratulations to founder Sandy Mitchell and all the friends of WindReach Farm for 20 years of celebration, and the many community volunteers who make this a very special community in my riding of Durham.

RELAY FOR LIFE

Mr. Dave Levac: Today I rise to commend the high school students of Pauline Johnson Collegiate, Brantford Collegiate Institute and North Park Collegiate and the volunteers for organizing a great Relay for Life, a fundraiser campaign for the Canadian Cancer Society held in my riding on May 22, put on solely by the high school students themselves.

I would also like to thank the teacher advisers, the administrators, the police officers and St. John Ambulance who were in attendance throughout the event, ensuring that the students were safe and secure from 7 o'clock in the evening on Friday through to 7 o'clock in the morning on Saturday.

The Canadian Cancer Society relies on volunteers such as these great students from across Ontario and Canada to lead the fight against cancer. The money raised at the Relay for Life campaign in Brant will go to the Canadian Cancer Society so that they can continue to research all the types of cancer there are, provide support for people living with cancer and offer the public comprehensible and credible information on cancer itself, risk reductions and the treatments provided.

The positive actions of these students, and of other students holding Relays for Life in the riding as well, involved in organizing, participating and seeking sponsors for the Relay for Life, need to be fully recognized. We are constantly hearing negative stories about young people and their attitudes towards community service, but I can tell you factually, after spending time with these students, that their good deeds in our communities across the province should be heralded and they should be thanked immensely. We thank those students for the great work they do for the Relay for Life.

DOUG MILLER

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Yesterday, our country, our province, the county of Simcoe and the community I live in, Coldwater, lost a true gentleman and a community leader. Our friend Doug Miller passed away yesterday, May 31, after a very, very brief illness.

Doug spent his whole career working with the Ontario government, with MTO, as a project manager. He was well respected, and he was really and truly an ambassador for this ministry.

Doug was a very healthy individual. He never smoked, he never drank. He exercised regularly, and he played hockey up until February of this year, at the age of 80.

He belonged to many sports organizations, council, the fire department, and he was an admired mentor to many of the individuals in the community.

He is survived by his wife, Arla; his children, John, Betty, Cathy and Terry; their spouses; seven grandchildren and two great-grandchildren.

Firstly, I want to thank Doug and Arla, because 10 years ago we were going through a provincial election—it was actually June 3—and Doug was instrumental in

selling memberships and running my campaign office. Both he and Arla worked extremely hard to get me elected, and I will never forget the effort and the admiration he had from the community as he went about selling memberships and asking people to support me.

It is a great loss for the community. I want to offer our condolences to Arla and her family. We truly have lost a great person in the province of Ontario, and he will be missed by everyone.

COSBURN MIDDLE SCHOOL

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I'm pleased to announce that Cosburn Middle School, in my riding, has won music awards. At the Kiwanis Music Festival of Toronto, our students received the following awards: silver for choral, gold for grade 7 concert band, and gold for grade 8 concert band. It's the first time that Cosburn has ever received gold in the Ontario Band Association festival, and as a result they were invited to the Yamaha MusicFest national competition, where the grade 8 band garnered yet another gold.

This week, on Wednesday, June 3 at 7 p.m., Cosburn music council will be holding a concert. This is Cosburn music council's first fundraising concert, and I invite all of you to come and see how talented these young musicians are. Their concert is called Inspiration. The event is the culmination of a year's hard work by over 300 students in their choir, vocal chamber ensemble, grade 7 and grade 8 concert bands, grade 7 and 8 jazz bands, jazz combo ensemble and rock band. Chad Doucette, Canadian Idol fourth-place finalist in 2006, will be the special guest star. The concert is at East York Collegiate Institute. All funds raised will help support this extra-curricular music program and its growing initiatives. All are welcome.

Among those who should be congratulated for all of this are the choir director, Jane Agosta, and the instrumental music director, Kevin Hrycay. Monica Maurin is the president of Cosburn music council. George Rowell is the principal.

INFRASTRUCTURE PROGRAM
FUNDING

Mr. Mario Sergio: I'm delighted to announce that the McGuinty government and the federal government have partnered to stimulate the economy through large-scale infrastructure programs all over Ontario. I would specifically like to commend this government's ongoing commitment to revitalizing our educational and research facilities, including York University, located within my riding of York West.

This joint venture between the federal and provincial governments has resulted in nearly \$100 million in funding to York University just last week alone. This massive funding allocated to our reputable university shows the commitment by the McGuinty government to Ontario: Not only does it provide students with better

access to education and higher learning, but it also demonstrates its commitment to our economy by creating jobs. I'm proud of our government's investments, and I'm proud of this government's ability to collaborate with the federal government so that more money quickly reaches sectors of our economy that need it most, keeping Ontario on the right track as we move forward.

This past week alone—part of this money is going to ameliorate, improve and build a wonderful new addition to Osgoode law school at York. It's going to benefit very largely not only the local economy, but also the students of York.

CONSUMER PROTECTION

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: Last week, the Insurance Brokers Association of Ontario was here at Queen's Park. They made a good case to members of all parties to ban the use of credit scoring in all lines of personal insurance. The government prohibits credit scoring from being used to rate or underwrite auto insurance—and we agree with that completely—but credit scoring is still allowed for property insurance.

1310

Some insurers are using credit scoring for home insurance and causing rates for some of my constituents to greatly increase or be cancelled outright. When that happens, drivers with multi-policy discounts see their auto insurance go up by as much as 15%. It appears that some insurers are getting around the auto insurance ban by jacking up rates on home insurance based on credit scoring.

Credit scoring affects those least able to pay for it: the unemployed, newcomers and single parents, and it appears to be spreading. In my riding, workers who have been laid off in the auto sector may be affected by this unfair, discriminatory practice through no fault of their own. Changes need to be made as soon as possible to protect drivers and homeowners during these difficult times.

The government already acknowledges that credit scoring is unfair to consumers and not in the public interest. Premier, we need to know, will you expand the ban on credit scoring to allow all lines of personal property insurance to be removed from credit scoring as soon as possible? We await your response.

SKILLED TRADES

Mr. Bill Mauro: Reps from Thunder Bay's Sheet Metal Workers Union Local 397 are bursting with pride thanks to one of their outstanding apprentices.

Kent Wicklund, an employee of Enerdry, came home a winner from the recent annual Canadian Conference of Sheet Metal Workers held in Winnipeg. At the conference, 11 apprentices participated in a competition that saw them attempting to design and create a copper umbrella holder. They had three days to mould flat pieces of

metal into a large vase, and were judged on three portions: theory pattern, drafting and practical.

Kent Wicklund was already the champion in the Ontario and Thunder Bay competitions. Last summer, a similar competition with a handful of classmates in Thunder Bay earned him a ticket to compete in a provincial competition in Ottawa against a dozen of his peers. His win in Ottawa got him to Winnipeg. Kent finished his five-year sheet metal apprenticeship in December and hopes the recognition will help him in his career.

This is the second year in a row a Thunder Bay apprentice has placed in the national competition. Curtis Halstead landed in third place when the conference was held in Quebec last year. He had won the provincial competition the previous year.

Congratulations also go out to Rick Thompson, Enerdry shop foreman and night school instructor for apprentices, who assisted Kent in his training, and Sheet Metal Workers Union Local 397 business manager Dave Bradshaw. To them, we offer our thanks. These gentlemen have continued to enhance the reputation of the building trades sector in Thunder Bay when it comes to skilled trades.

They have a long, established reputation, from coast to coast, as being some of the best-skilled tradespeople in our country, and these recent apprentices continue with that tradition.

CANADIAN FORCES

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel: On Friday, May 15, the town of Forest in Lambton Shores in my riding of Lambton-Kent-Middlesex was the location for a parade to welcome home eight members of the Canadian armed forces who were all returning home to the area after recently serving in Afghanistan.

The returning soldiers were: Captain David Anderson of the First Hussars; Master Corporal Matt Williams, First Hussars; Corporal Joel Fraser, First RCR; Corporal Jim Cosgrove, First Hussars; Corporal Jim Brand, Third Battalion RCR; Trooper Chris Brown of the Royal Canadian Dragoons; Private Jarrod Charron of the Third Battalion RCR; and Private Jamie Scherer, Second Service Battalion.

The veterans were greeted by crowds of family, friends and neighbours lining the streets, waving Canadian flags and wearing red shirts to show their support for the Canadian troops. The parade began at the library, led by the Legion colour guard, and drove along downtown Forest before ending at the Legion. People not only applauded as the soldiers were escorted along the route, but then many walked alongside these young men as the parade moved toward the Legion Hall.

The strong pride and support for these local boys was very evident in this rural community, but so was the relief and happiness for the safe return of these young men to their families and homes.

I would like to thank the organizers of the parade: Dan Dew, Brad Pettigrew and the Forest Legion, who organized the event to show the support and the appreciation we have for our troops serving in Afghanistan. Through their efforts and those of many others, the town of Forest was able to give these vets a homecoming parade to remember.

AZORES DAY

Mr. Charles Sousa: I'm pleased to rise today and recognize Azorean Day. Today, Canadian-Azoreans have gathered here at Queen's Park to celebrate their heritage and raise the Azorean flag.

Heading the special ceremony will be the President of the government of the Azores, Sr. Dr. Carlos César, and the president of the regional assembly, Sr. Dr. Francisco Coelho.

Here with us as well is Portugal's ambassador to Canada, Dr. Pedro de Almeida, and the Consul General of Portugal in Toronto, Maria Amélia de Paiva, in the east gallery. Thank you for being here.

They are joined by approximately 200 visitors from the autonomous region of the Azores who have come to attend a weekend of festivities in Ontario and the flag-raising ceremony, along with many Azorean Ontario families. In total, approximately 500 people are here at Queen's Park today to celebrate their Azorean heritage.

The Azores is an archipelago comprised of nine distinct and beautiful green islands. Founded by Gonçalo Velho in 1427, the Azores are located in the mid-Atlantic, off the coast of Portugal. Its nine islands—Santa Maria, São Miguel, Terceira, Graciosa, São Jorge, Pico, Faial, Flores and Corvo—are rich in tradition and history. [Remarks in Portuguese].

The islands have been a strategic location throughout the centuries for early explorers and navigators, as well as fishing fleets destined for the shores of Newfoundland and Labrador. The region is known for its active volcanoes, its green mountains, its unique ecology, its religious festivals and especially its generous people.

I have a special fondness for the Azorean people. My wife, Zenaida, is a native of the Azores.

The Azorean people have made a tremendous impact on Ontario and on Canada as a whole. In fact, Ontario is home to one of the largest Azorean communities in the world. Approximately 80% of Ontario's Portuguese population comes from the Azores.

The flag-raising celebration today is especially significant because this is only the second time that the Azorean officials have travelled outside of Portugal to celebrate the raising of their flag. The first time was last year in Massachusetts, and now Azoreans have honoured Ontario by being here today.

On behalf of all the members of this House, I say to our guests: [Remarks in Portuguese].

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

PROTECTION OF VULNERABLE AND ELDERLY PEOPLE FROM ABUSE ACT (POWERS OF ATTORNEY), 2009

LOI DE 2009 SUR LA PROTECTION DES PERSONNES VULNÉRABLES ET DES PERSONNES ÂGÉES CONTRE LES MAUVAIS TRAITEMENTS (PROCURATIONS)

Mr. O'Toole moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 188, An Act to amend the Substitute Decisions Act, 1992 with respect to powers of attorney / Projet de loi 188, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1992 sur la prise de décisions au nom d'autrui en ce qui a trait aux procurations.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member for a short statement?

Mr. John O'Toole: As June is the month that's recognized for seniors in Ontario, I'm pleased to introduce the substitute decisions amendment act, powers of attorney, 2009. The bill is intended to protect seniors and other vulnerable individuals from the abuse of powers of attorney. I appreciate the advice and input I've received from constituents in the preparation of the bill, and more specifically from Brenda and Alan Hoyne. I'd also like to thank Tammy Rankin, chair of the Durham Elder Abuse Network; Sergeant John Keating, the senior support coordinator for the Durham Regional Police Service; and also Richard Wall, who was a Bliss Institute of Applied Politics student who worked with me as an intern; as well as Andrew Galloro; and Vanessa Yolles, legal counsel.

The purpose of the bill technically is to improve the security of seniors. The short title of the bill would be an act to protect vulnerable people and elders from abuse.

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS AMENDMENT ACT, 2009

LOI DE 2009 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES NORMES D'EMPLOI

Ms. DiNovo moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 189, An Act to amend the Employment Standards Act, 2000 / Projet de loi 189, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2000 sur les normes d'emploi.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

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The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member for a short statement?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: This bill re-enacts new definitions of "employee" and "employer." An "employee" is

defined to include anyone who works on a personal basis or supplies services on a personal basis in an activity or enterprise, whether a person receives wages directly or indirectly from the employer. An “employer” includes every entity or person involved in an activity or enterprise who is directly or indirectly responsible for the work of a person in it.

A provision is added to the act specifying that all employers of an employee are jointly and severally liable for any contravention of this act and the regulations and for wages owing to any employees.

The bill makes various amendments relating to unpaid wages. The bill provides that any authorized deductions from an employees’ wages are deemed to be unpaid wages owing to the employee, that unpaid wages earn interest and that unpaid wages constitute a lien, charge and secured debt against the employer.

A new part respecting employment agencies is added to the act. Employment agencies are prohibited from charging or receiving a fee for employing or obtaining employment for a person or providing information about employers seeking employees.

The bill also adds a new part allowing a person to file a claim for unjust dismissal in the specified circumstances. If an employment standards officer decides that a person has been unjustly dismissed, the officer may order the employer to pay compensation to the dismissed person, to reinstate the person to their previous position and may order any other thing that is equitable in the circumstances.

The bill adds a provision prohibiting an employer from paying different employees at different rates of pay or providing different employment benefits to different employees solely on the basis of factors such as the number of hours that an employee works, where their work is otherwise similar.

A number of changes are made to the procedures regarding complaints and enforcement. Currently, an employment standards officer has the discretion to respond to complaints by making various types of orders. The bill would require that orders must be made in the specified circumstances. Complaints regarding termination due to alleged reprisals are to be dealt with under an expedited procedure and the terminated person may, at their request, be reinstated to their position pending resolution of the complaint.

CEN-TOWER INVESTMENTS LIMITED ACT, 2009

Mr. Bailey moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr25, An Act to revive Cen-Tower Investments Limited.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Pursuant to standing order 86, the bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills.

PROPERTY RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES ACT, 2009 LOI DE 2009 SUR LES DROITS ET RESPONSABILITÉS EN MATIÈRE DE BIENS

Mr. Barrett moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 190, An Act to amend the Expropriations Act and the Human Rights Code with respect to property rights and responsibilities / Projet de loi 190, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l’expropriation et le Code des droits de la personne en ce qui a trait aux droits et responsabilités en matière de biens.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member for a short statement?

Mr. Toby Barrett: The bill amends the Expropriations Act and the Human Rights Code to enhance the protection that Ontario law gives to owners of property, whether real or personal.

Under the Expropriations Act, an inquiry officer in an inquiry is required to consider the merits of the objectives of the expropriating authority and to add, as parties to an expropriation inquiry, the owners of all lands affected by the expropriation. The decision of the approving authority is subject to judicial review.

The amendments to the Human Rights Code recognize, subject to specific limitations at law, the right to own property, whether real or personal, the right to peaceful enjoyment of one’s property and the right to freedom from search of one’s real property and home and from seizure of one’s personal property located there. Those rights have long been recognized at common law but are largely missing from the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

The amendments to the Human Rights Code also include the moral responsibility to maintain one’s real property. The short title is Property Rights and Responsibilities Act, 2009.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

IPPERWASH PROVINCIAL PARK

Hon. Brad Duguid: It’s an honour for me to rise in the House today as the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs, two years after Justice Sidney Linden released the report of the Ipperwash inquiry. The report of the Ipperwash inquiry is very significant. It’s the road map for the government to work in partnership with First Nations and Metis in order to improve the quality of life for aboriginal communities in Ontario.

The creation of a stand-alone Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs was one of the key recommendations of Justice

Linden's report. It's because of this report and the efforts of various individuals that I stand before you in this capacity.

Today, as we celebrate our progress in moving forward on the recommendations outlined in the report, we must also reflect on the tragic loss of Anthony O'Brien "Dudley" George at Ipperwash Provincial Park in September 1995, an unfortunate tragedy that we cannot undo; a loss, however, that has kindled a new relationship between aboriginal people and our government, based on respect and reconciliation.

I'd also like to recognize the perseverance and achievements of a variety of people who were involved at the time of Dudley's death and since: Dudley's brother, Maynard Sam George, and his wife, Veronica; the Honourable Gerry Phillips; Maria Van Bommel, MPP for Lambton-Kent-Middlesex; Chief Liz Cloud of the Kettle and Stony Point First Nation; former National Chief Ovide Mercredi; former Ontario Regional Chief Gord Peters; former Kettle and Stony Point First Nation Chief Tom Bressette; Justice Sidney Linden; the community of Chippewas of Kettle and Stony Point; and the members of Aazhoojena and the municipality of Lambton Shores. I applaud the efforts of all these individuals and others. The list is simply too long to acknowledge everyone.

Last week, I experienced the honour and privilege of signing the historic Ipperwash park transfer process agreement with Chief Liz Cloud and the Chippewas of Kettle and Stony Point and the residents of Aazhoojena. During the course of that day, two interactions with people demonstrated to me just how significant this agreement really is.

When I arrived at a traditional sunrise ceremony on the shores of Lake Huron, right in Ipperwash park, I was greeted by a respected elder who, with tears in her eyes, gave me a huge hug and said, "I've waited all my life for this. I really never thought it would happen in my lifetime."

A second moment of truth came after the ceremony when I was speaking with a group of school children. A young girl leaned over to me and said, "My parents have been speaking about this land all my life. Does this mean it really is ours now?"

You can't believe the feeling I had, explaining to these schoolchildren that this land will soon belong to them, and their children when they have families. The excited looks on their faces as they looked around at the beautiful land their forefathers once walked told the whole story.

But more remains to be done. The Ipperwash report was released on May 31, 2007, and includes 100 recommendations spanning the responsibility of 10 different ministries and the federal government.

This government has already implemented and is moving forward on a great number of Justice Linden's recommendations. As Minister of Aboriginal Affairs, I'm honoured to co-chair the Ipperwash Priorities and Action Committee, along with Ontario Regional Chief Angus Toulouse. This committee brings together First Nation leadership with representatives from the provincial and

federal governments. Since its establishment last spring, the Ipperwash Priorities and Action Committee has worked to prioritize Justice Linden's recommendations in ways that best meet the needs of First Nation people and communities across Ontario.

We're also working with the Metis Nation of Ontario to implement the report's recommendations in ways that best meet the needs of Metis people in Ontario. Through an agreement signed last November, we're working to improve the well-being of Metis children, families and communities, while working to protect and promote the distinct culture, identity, and heritage of Metis people.

We have established the New Relationship Fund to help First Nations and Metis more effectively engage with government and the private sector. We've committed \$30 million toward reaching a resource benefits sharing plan with aboriginal communities.

1330

As well, ministry staff have been meeting with their federal counterparts to discuss ways to improve the Ontario land claims process. My ministry has set targets of three years to remove the claims backlog and three years to process new claims.

Many of Justice Linden's recommendations involve efforts across government, and I am proud of the progress our government has made. Recent government initiatives stemming from the report include improved mining legislation recently introduced by my colleague Northern Development and Mines Minister Michael Gravelle. Ontario, through the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services, is the only province to specifically dedicate part of the federal police officers recruitment fund to First Nation policing. The Ministry of the Attorney General, along with the Ministry of Children and Youth Services and the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services, is working to provide more meaningful use of aboriginal community justice opportunities and improved access to justice.

I'm proud to say that, utilizing Justice Linden's report as our guide and by working together with First Nation and Metis people in this province, the government is making strides toward healing, reconciliation and building a better future for all Ontarians. We've gone from what may have been described as an historical low in the relationship between the Ontario government and aboriginal peoples in communities to what is now considered by many to be an historical high point.

We will continue to address historical wrongs and inequalities as we work together to close the socio-economic gap between aboriginal and non-aboriginal people in Ontario. I look forward to achieving continued success together with aboriginal partners.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Responses?

Mr. Norm Miller: I'm pleased to have the opportunity to respond to the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and his statement today concerning the Ipperwash report and Ipperwash Provincial Park.

The Ipperwash inquiry results were released some two years ago. There were over 100 recommendations put

forward by Justice Sidney Linden. Many of those recommendations have still to be acted on. One of the most pivotal recommendations in the Ipperwash inquiry was that Ontario should establish a permanent, independent and impartial agency to facilitate and oversee the settling of land and treaty claims. The government has done little as of yet to create a body.

As a member of the opposition, I'd like to point out further inaction and the problems with this government's approach to dealing with controversial issues, and that is the situation at Caledonia. If you look at Caledonia, it has been over three years since the occupation started there, and it goes on and it's having a terrible effect on the whole area. This government's haphazard approach to dealing with land claims and their inaction with Caledonia is creating real uncertainty in the area so that economic development in the area is in a very poor state. The good relations that did exist between the First Nations communities and the other communities in the area of Caledonia that existed for some 200 years have been adversely affected and continue to be adversely affected because this situation continues to go on.

The representative from Haldimand-Norfolk, a few weeks ago, asked a question to do with that area. Past Premier David Peterson was brought in to help try to settle things. He did negotiate and transfer some lands in that area. In particular, the member from Haldimand-Norfolk brings up the 378 acres at the Burtch Correctional Centre. I guess my question and the question that the member from Haldimand-Norfolk was asking is: What was the benefit of negotiating these 378 acres of land to the First Nations? The situation there continues; the impasse continues. Relations between communities have been wrecked, and we have the whole economy of that area negatively affected, for First Nations communities as well as the other communities in the area.

We have the ongoing blind eye—that this government doesn't want to address the situation of illegal cigarettes in the province. Some 50% of the cigarettes being sold in the province are illegal cigarettes being sold through smoke shacks. What are the consequences of that? Certainly the health consequences are significant, particularly for First Nations youth, in that they have a very high incidence of smoking. Those cigarettes have been shown to have—as bad as cigarettes are, the illegal ones are worse than the production ones—more chemicals and various other things in them that shouldn't be in them. So we have some real health concerns there, not to mention the lost revenues for the province of Ontario. This government turns a blind eye to that.

They have gone on now for some three and a half years not settling the situation in Caledonia. The member from Haldimand-Norfolk brings up questions about what other Ontario Realty Corp. land in that area might be up for grabs to be negotiated away and what's going to come from it. He brought up the Sprucedale correctional centre, a former OPP office, a horticultural research farm—all near Simcoe—the Jarvis and Canfield MTO yards, the Cayuga courthouse, Rock Point Provincial Park, Selkirk Provincial Park. Some 4,700 acres in South

Cayuga and 1,400 acres in Townsend—so that's an uncertainty in the area represented by the member for Haldimand-Norfolk.

In conclusion, in the short time I have available, I would just like to point out that from the opposition's perspective, there are many problems still out there. So the minister can talk about the Ipperwash report—though even with the Ipperwash report, most of the 100 recommendations have not yet been acted on.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Responses?

M^{me} France Gélinas: It is my pleasure to share a few comments on the statement made on Ipperwash by the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs.

Our party certainly welcomes the important step of returning Ipperwash park to its rightful owners, the Kettle and Stony Point First Nation people, who had this land taken away without their consent 60 years ago. We welcome this act as a way of remembering and honouring the memory of Dudley George, who was so unjustly deprived of his life 14 years ago.

To really deeply honour Dudley George, we must also remember that hundreds, if not thousands, of other First Nations people across Ontario continue to struggle for their basic rights and dignity to this day. Too many First Nations people in Ontario are stuck waiting for their land claims to be resolved.

Two years ago, the Ipperwash inquiry led to recommendations to speed up the resolution of outstanding land claim disputes in Ontario. Justice Linden recommended that the disputed land should be returned immediately to Stony Point First Nation and that they should also receive compensation. So I ask, where is the compensation?

Justice Linden recommended the establishment of a permanent, independent and impartial agency to facilitate and oversee the settling of land and treaty claims. I ask, where is this agency?

Justice Linden recommended that Ontario improve public education about its land claim policy as well as aboriginal burial and heritage sites. Here again, I ask, where is the public education?

Justice Linden recommended that the OPP should establish a formal consultation committee with major aboriginal organizations in Ontario. Where is the committee?

Justice Linden recommended that the OPP establish an internal process to ensure that racist and culturally insensitive behaviour by police is dealt with publicly. When will this take place?

Justice Linden called for the establishment of an Ontario aboriginal reconciliation fund. Where is the fund?

Too many people who stand up for their rights as First Nations people continue to experience what I call the strong arm of the law—as did Mr. Dudley George: people like Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwug Chief Donny Morris and his fellow council members, who were bankrupted by court fees and sentenced to jail, all for trying to protect their own land from mining; people like former Algonquin Chief Robert Lovelace, who was imprisoned for fighting plans to mine uranium on land claimed by the Algonquin First Nation near Sharbot Lake.

1340

Let's celebrate the return of Ipperwash park to its rightful First Nations owners, but let's not be too self-congratulatory in the process. Let's remember that even as this government honours Dudley George today, it continues to violate the rights of First Nations people across the province by failing to implement the recommendations of the Ipperwash inquiry, by failing to ensure that the federal government deals with the backlog of land claims, and by failing to ensure aboriginal peoples' right to full, prior and informed consent before mining takes place on their land.

The return of Ipperwash lands to the Kettle and Stony Point First Nation people is welcomed, but it is only one step on the long journey toward justice and reconciliation for First Nations people in Ontario.

INJURED WORKERS' DAY

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The Minister of Labour on a point of order.

Hon. Peter Fonseca: I believe we have unanimous consent that up to five minutes be allotted to each party to speak in commemoration of Injured Workers' Day, and that a moment of silence be observed.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Agreed? Agreed.

Hon. Peter Fonseca: I'm honoured to rise in the Legislature to speak on behalf of Ontario workers who have been injured on the job. Today, June 1, is the day when we pay our respects to those who have been injured or killed simply because they went to work—simply because they went to work.

Workplace injuries affect not only workers; their families, their friends, their co-workers and their communities also suffer. We have the duty to do what we can to prevent this unnecessary loss. We must do what we can to ensure that at the end of the day everyone can come home to their families and friends safe and sound.

Our government takes workplace health and safety very seriously. We made a commitment to reduce the annual rate of workplace injuries by 20% from 2004 to 2008. We hired an additional 200 health and safety inspectors. We focused inspections on workplaces with the worst health and safety records. We exceeded our ambitious goals. From 2004 to 2008, Ontario's annual rate of lost-time workplace injuries dropped by over 20%.

My ministry continues to work with our health and safety partners, such as the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board, and safe workplace associations to instill a culture of injury prevention in all workplaces. We're seeing real results in the prevention of workplace injuries, but we still have a lot of work to do, and we must do it together to see our efforts succeed. I assure you that these efforts will continue.

My ministry's current strategy for enforcing the Occupational Health and Safety Act is called Safe at Work Ontario. This strategy gives inspectors more flexibility to work with employers to develop a strong health and safety culture in the workplace. At the same

time, this strategy targets for proactive inspection those workplaces with the highest rates of injuries.

Our prevention efforts are just one part of the equation. We must also have a compensation system for those who have suffered workplace injuries. The McGuinty government has been working to put more money into the hands of those workers injured on the job through Workplace Safety and Insurance Board benefit increases.

You see, from 1994 to 2006, there was erosion of inflation protection that saw injured workers' benefits increase by only 2.9% while inflation rose by almost 29%. Our government sought to redress this by enhancing benefits for more than 155,000 injured workers. We've increased benefits by 2.5% in each of the last three years. Future increases to benefits are now under review, and we must continue to work with the WSIB and our health and safety partners to remove the hardships, the hurdles and the stigma associated with being injured at work.

Today we reflect on the devastation caused by workplace injuries and fatalities. This is a day to remember those who have lost their lives or who have had their lives forever altered by workplace injuries. This is also a day for every one of us to strengthen our commitment to workplace health and safety. There is more to do, and I believe that we can do it by working together.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Responses?

Mr. Robert Bailey: I'm privileged to be able to speak on behalf of the official opposition about Injured Workers' Day, June 1, 2009. Injured Workers' Day is a day to reconfirm our commitment to a safe and healthy workplace. It is also a day when all of us are reminded that every year, far too many of our fellow Ontarians are injured on the job. The WSIB states that there are some 275,000 workplace injury or disease claims per year. Many of these are life-altering incidents, sometimes with shattering consequences to the injured worker and their family. As elected representatives, we have an obligation to workers injured on the job that they will be taken care of.

Workplace safety is an issue that rises above partisan politics. There is not a member in this place who wouldn't do everything in their power to make sure that we have safe workplaces. We may differ on how we make sure we have safe workplaces, but there is no one here who has a monopoly on workplace safety. That is why I do have a word of warning today on making sure that injured workers get the support they need when an accident happens.

We all support the role that the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board plays in taking care of injured workers and in raising awareness of workplace safety. Although sometimes graphic, the advertising campaign that the WSIB ran recently was a good example of raising public awareness. On our side of the House, we want to make sure there is a strong WSIB so that injured workers can continue to receive the support they need. That's why our party is very concerned about the state of finances of the WSIB.

The WSIB, as everyone in this House knows, had a commitment to wipe out its unfunded liability by 2014. That will be the 100th anniversary of the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board. Unfortunately, the unfunded liability is the difference between what the board has to pay injured workers and the assets they have on hand to do so. Recently, the board quietly announced they were no longer going to be able to meet that commitment. As a matter of fact, they announced that the unfunded liability had ballooned from \$8.1 billion to at least \$11.5 billion. They have not set a new target to eliminate the unfunded liability; they have just abandoned the old one.

I believe that we owe it to injured workers to make sure that the WSIB is going to be able to meet those future commitments. I'm concerned that given the current finances of the board, they may not be able to do so. They either will have to reduce benefits or increase premiums—or I suspect that they will do a combination of both.

Injured workers need a strong, financially stable WSIB. They need it and they deserve it. In order to make sure that's what we have, we suggest that the Provincial Auditor go into the WSIB and do a comprehensive audit. If we want to have a safer and healthy future for Ontario workers, we need a strong, financially viable Workplace Safety and Insurance Board.

Mr. Paul Miller: I'm honoured to stand before this Legislature to speak about the plight of injured workers in Ontario. I was privileged to speak to those injured workers who came to the Legislature today to seek support from this government.

This morning, at a press conference, a group including the Ontario Network of Injured Workers Groups, the Research Action Alliance on the Consequences of Work Injury and Injured Workers' Consultants groups released a report titled *Impacts of Workplace Injury: Is This What Justice Meredith Envisioned? A Study of the Economic and Social Impacts of Workplace Injury and Illness*. The report starts out with a quotation from Justice Sir William Ralph Meredith, for whom the Meredith principles, the foundation of workers' compensation, were named. It states: "A just compensation law based upon a division between the employer and the workman of the loss occasioned by industrial accidents ought to provide that the compensation should continue to be paid as long as the disability caused by the accident lasts, and the amount of compensation should have relation to the earning power of the injured worker."

Justice Meredith did not want the injured worker to become a burden upon his relatives or friends or upon the community. Sadly, this basic tenet of workers' compensation has been forgotten. Statistics show how many injured workers are Ontario Works and ODSP recipients. This does not take into account the number of injured workers who are not part of any other program, but live in poverty in Ontario every day.

This morning the report was released, a rally was held, and a vigil is taking place to bring to light the plight of injured workers all over our province.

1350

At the rally, injured workers were clear in their demands for the implementation of cost of living for their compensation. The government should be ashamed that Injured Workers' Day is an annual event. We should be treating our injured workers with the compensation they deserve, not pushing them to rallies to hold a vigil and stand in OW and ODSP lines just to make ends meet.

The following quote from the report says it all: "For nearly 20 years" they've "been asking the Workers' Compensation Board (WCB), and subsequently the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB), as well as successive provincial governments to track down the employment wage losses and health outcomes of workers with permanent disabilities. Neither the WCB/WSIB nor government departments have taken on this task."

Since my election, I've been after this government to eliminate deeming and experience rating and to return to a true compensation system. The Premier had the chance to begin these necessary changes to the WSIB. Instead, he reappointed one of the problems, the chair, Mr. Mahoney. He has a majority and can return to the workers' compensation system but chooses not to take this necessary action. Many injured workers—

Interjection.

Mr. Paul Miller: The member across is mocking injured workers, I guess.

Mr. Michael A. Brown: I'm mocking you.

Mr. Paul Miller: Many injured workers who contact me talk about being made to feel like they are leeches on society, that they are faking it and the huge impact this has on their healing time. Professional assessments by injured workers' health professionals are often disregarded by the WSIB in favour of the board's hand-picked professionals' opinions.

Many applicants don't even get satisfaction at the first contact with the board. A teacher whose student in the classroom twisted her arm, causing serious injury to her rotator cuff and two months off work, had her claim denied. How can that happen? How many more defeated injured workers like her have fallen off the record, but live on with pain and restricted mobility?

Does the WSIB even have a handle on the real numbers of injured workers in Ontario? I think not.

The research begun with the report released today will hopefully—hopefully, Speaker—give the government the starting point that it apparently needs to do the right thing by Ontario's injured workers.

The writers say it best in the conclusion of their report: "It is our hope that research findings will increase awareness of the problems with the compensation system in Ontario, inspire reform, and bring the system closer to the just compensation for the duration of injury or illness envisioned by Sir William Meredith."

Premier, and the government, I encourage you to take the lead on this issue and begin the reform necessary for injured workers in this province. Scrap the insurance system now in place and begin the process to return On-

tario to the workers' compensation system it so desperately needs.

In closing, the government is bragging about all their increases, 2%, 2.5%, even 3%, if possible. Well, it works out to be about \$5 a week. I don't know what this minister and that government could do on \$5 a week—not a heck of a lot. You might be able to buy a paper.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd ask all members and our guests to please rise as we observe a moment of silence for workers killed or injured on the job or who are victims of occupational disease.

The House observed a moment's silence.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

ANSWERS TO WRITTEN QUESTIONS

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd just remind those ministers who are in the House and those ministers' legislative assistants who are watching in their offices of standing order 99(d) and the written questions. I would ask you to peruse the order paper to see if you have any outstanding questions. We need to ensure that those questions are answered for the members who wrote them.

PETITIONS

HEALTH CARE

Mr. Robert Bailey: This petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care should recognize the importance of rural health care in Ontario; and

"Whereas the Erie St. Clair Local Health Integration Network commissioned a report by the Hay Group that recommends downgrading the emergency room at the Charlotte Eleanor Englehart (CEE) Hospital in Petrolia to an urgent-care ward; and

"Whereas, if accepted, that recommendation would increase the demand on emergency room services in Sarnia; and

"Whereas, as of today, many patients are already redirected to the Petrolia emergency room for medical care; and

"Whereas the Petrolia medical community has stated that the loss of the Petrolia emergency room will result in the loss of many local doctors; and

"Whereas Petrolia's retirement and nursing home communities are very dependent on easy access to the CEE hospital;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to urge the Erie St. Clair Local Health Integration Network to completely reject the report of the Hay Group and leave the emergency room designation at Charlotte Eleanor Englehart Hospital in Petrolia as is."

I agree with this and affix my signature to it.

ONTARIO PHARMACISTS

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas physically present pharmacists have served the Ontario public well over the years by ensuring high levels of safety and care, and the requirement for the physical presence of a pharmacist to operate a pharmacy and compound, dispense or sell a drug in a pharmacy should be left intact to protect the public interest;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"We request that the laws requiring the physical presence of a pharmacist to operate a pharmacy and compound, dispense or sell any drug in a pharmacy be left intact; specifically, clauses 146(1)(a) and (b) and 149(1)(a), (b), (c), (d) and (e) of the Drug and Pharmacies Regulation Act be left intact and unchanged, and legislation should not be introduced which undermines the protections and service offered by physically present pharmacists."

I agree with this and I affix my signature and give it to Joseph to be delivered.

POWER PLANT

Mr. Dave Levac: As I introduce this petition to the Legislative Assembly, please allow me the grace of introducing Mr. Bob Brown and his guide dog Boon, and Mr. Marc Proulx and his guide dog Felix, from my riding, who have come to watch the proceedings today.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas First Nations, Ontario, Canada and the world have a responsibility for the perpetual care and maintenance of our land and resources; and

"Whereas First Nations, Ontario, Canada and the world must work co-operatively to reduce greenhouse gas emissions resulting from power generation; and

"Whereas demand for clean electricity continues to grow; and

"Whereas our electricity demands are mostly reliant on fossil fuels, nuclear energy and hydroelectric (water), and all three will remain a part of the mix as we transition to renewable forms of electricity such as wind, solar, biomass and geothermal; and

"Whereas natural gas has the lowest greenhouse gas emissions of all the fossil fuels; and

"Whereas duly appointed leaders within the Haudenosaunee Six Nations confederacy, the Six Nations elected band council, the province of Ontario and the Ontario Power Authority support, in principle, the Eagles Nest power plant power generation facility; and

"Whereas the proponents, Guswhenta Developments, have completed a Six Nations territory community-wide survey and received majority community support; and

"Whereas the Eagles Nest power plant establishes a template to explore further partnership opportunities toward the completion of new transmission lines and the

restoration of existing lines within the Haldimand tract; and

"Whereas these initiatives and partnerships will provide an opportunity for the community of Six Nations to become energy self-sufficient over a 20-year period; and

"Whereas this power plant will assist in replacing the power from the soon-to-be-decommissioned Nanticoke coal-fired plant; and

"Whereas this native and non-native partnership will benefit the Six Nations, Brant and Ontario economies and will help to restore and enhance the goodwill and co-operation between these political entities;

"Therefore, be it resolved and understood that we, the undersigned, do hereby petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to issue a directive in respect to the Eagles Nest power plant power generation facility and the historic partnership this project represents."

I sign this petition and hand it over to Ajoy, who is our page.

CEMETERIES

Mr. Toby Barrett: This petition is addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It contains signatures gathered by the Grand River branch, United Empire Loyalists.

"Whereas Ontario's cemeteries are an important part of our cultural heritage and Ontario's inactive cemeteries are constantly at risk of closure and removal; and

"Ontario's cemeteries are an irreplaceable part of the province's cultural heritage;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"The government must pass Bill 149, the Inactive Cemeteries Protection Act, 2009, to prohibit the relocation of inactive cemeteries in the province of Ontario."

I also affix my signature to this petition.

1400

TUITION

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I have thousands of names here on these petitions. It reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ontario Liberal government cancelled the tuition fee freeze after only two years and approved fee increases of up to 36% over the next four years; and

"Whereas tuition fees in Ontario have increased by more than four times the rate of inflation over the past 15 years; and

"Whereas a majority of Ontarians oppose tuition fee increases and support greater public funding for colleges and universities; and

"Whereas improvements to student financial assistance are undermined by fee increases; and

"Whereas the Ontario government's recent increase to student loan limits is set to push student debt to approximately \$28,000 for a four-year program; and

"Whereas per-student investment in Ontario still lags significantly behind the vast majority of jurisdictions in North America;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, support the Canadian Federation of Students' call to stop tuition fee hikes and petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to:

"—reduce tuition fees to 2004 levels for all students in Ontario and implement an immediate tuition fee freeze;

"—increase public funding for post-secondary education to promote access and quality;

"—expand access to financial aid in Ontario, especially for part-time students; and

"—double the number of upfront, need-based grants for Ontario students."

I sign this petition.

CEMETERIES

Mr. Jim Brownell: I have a petition on Bill 149.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas protecting and preserving" Ontario's cemeteries is a shared responsibility "... and a foundation of civilized society; and

"Whereas failure to safeguard one of our last remaining authentic original heritage resources, Ontario's inactive cemeteries, would be disastrous for the continuity of the historical record and our collective culture in this province;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"The government must pass Bill 149, the Inactive Cemeteries Protection Act, 2009, to prohibit the relocation of inactive cemeteries in the province of Ontario."

As I agree with this petition, I shall sign it and send it to the clerks' table.

TAXATION

Mr. Norm Miller: I have many petitions—hundreds—from Emsdale, Huntsville, Bracebridge and Gravenhurst, to do with the new McGuinty sales tax.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the McGuinty government is planning to merge the 8% provincial sales tax and the 5% federal sales tax; and

"Whereas the new 13% ... sales tax will be applied to products" and services "not previously subject to provincial sales tax such as gasoline, home heating fuels, home renovations, haircuts, hamburgers, television service, Internet service, telephone and cell services, taxi fees, bus, train and airplane tickets, and dry cleaning services; and

"Whereas rural and northern Ontarians will be particularly hard hit by" Mr. McGuinty's new "sales tax, as will seniors and families;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the McGuinty government should remove" the new "... sales tax from its 2009-10 budget."

I support this petition.

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Mr. Mike Colle: This petition is from unemployed workers seeking fairness.

"Whereas the federal government's employment insurance surplus now stands at" more than "\$54 billion; and

"Whereas over 75% of Ontario's unemployed"—especially workers in St Catharines—"are not eligible for employment insurance because of Ottawa's unfair eligibility rules; and

"Whereas an Ontario worker has to work more weeks to qualify and receives fewer weeks of benefits than other Canadian unemployed workers; and

"Whereas the average Ontario unemployed worker gets \$4,000 less in EI benefits than unemployed workers in other provinces ... thus ... not qualifying for many retraining programs;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to press the federal government to reform the employment insurance program and to end the discrimination and unfairness towards Ontario's unemployed workers."

I'm in solidarity with the unemployed workers of Ontario and their seeking of justice, and I affix my name to the petition.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. John O'Toole: I have a petition from the constituents of the riding of Durham that reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the municipality of Clarington passed resolution C-049-09 in support of Lakeridge Health Bowmanville; and

"Whereas area doctors, hospital staff and citizens have raised concerns that Bowmanville's hospital could turn into little more than a site to stabilize and transfer patients for treatment outside the municipality; and

"Whereas Clarington is a growing community of over 80,000; and

"Whereas we support the continuation of the Lakeridge Bowmanville site through access to on-site services, including emergency room, internal medicine and general surgery;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, request that the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and the McGuinty government take" all "the necessary actions to fund our hospitals equally and fairly. And furthermore, we request that the clinical services plan of the Central East Local Health Integration Network address the need for the Bowmanville hospital to continue to offer a complete

range of services appropriate for the growing community of Clarington."

I'm pleased to sign and support this, and to present it to one of the pages, Brittany.

TAXATION

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas residents in Dufferin-Caledon do not want a provincial harmonized sales tax ... that will raise the cost of goods and services they use every day; and

"Whereas the 13% blended sales tax will cause everyone to pay more for gasoline for their cars, heat, telephone, cable and Internet services for their homes, and will be applied to home sales over \$400,000; and

"Whereas the 13% blended sales tax will cause everyone to pay more for meals under \$4, haircuts, funeral services, gym memberships, newspapers, and lawyer and accountant fees; and

"Whereas the blended sales tax grab will affect everyone in the province: seniors, students, families and low-income Ontarians;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the McGuinty Liberal government not increase taxes for Ontario families."

I support this petition. I'm pleased to affix my name to it and give it to page Stephen.

BATHURST HEIGHTS ADULT LEARNING CENTRE

Mr. Mike Colle: I have a petition from students at the Bathurst Heights Adult Learning Centre in my riding.

"Whereas there are over 2,000 adult ESL students being served by the Bathurst Heights Adult Learning Centre....

"Whereas this is the only English as a second language (ESL) learning centre in this area" and is located right on the subway, making it very handy; and

"Whereas newcomers in Toronto, and in the Lawrence Heights area, need the Bathurst Heights Adult Learning Centre so they can succeed in their career opportunities; and

"Whereas the proposed revitalization of Lawrence Heights threatens the existence of the centre;

"Therefore we, the undersigned," request "that any revitalization of Lawrence Heights include a newcomer centre and ensure that the Bathurst Heights centre continues to exist in the present location."

I support the students and staff at Bathurst Heights and I affix my name to the petition.

HOSPITAL SERVICES

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: A friend of mine, Fran Moreau, presented a couple of thousand of these to me

the other day. It's called Save Our Outpatient Services. It says:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the North Simcoe Muskoka Local Health Integration Network has mandated that the Huronia District Hospital balance their budget and the interim CEO has decided to remove outpatient services from the Penetanguishene site: diagnostic testing, laboratory, ultrasound, the diabetes program, dietitian counselling, nurse practitioner and physiotherapy services; and

"Whereas the diabetes program and dietitian counselling have been shown to make a financial saving to Penetanguishene General Hospital by reducing the number of hospital admissions and complications. The number of Ontarians with diabetes has increased over the last 10 years and is projected to increase from 900,000 to 1.2 million by 2010; and

"Whereas the Ontario government has promised \$741 million over four years to manage, treat and prevent diabetes, and the closing of outpatient services does not appear to be a responsible solution to balance the budget on one hand and spend many unnecessary dollars in the community on the other hand; and

"Whereas the diabetes program and dietitian counselling are housed in the wellness centre at the Penetanguishene site, which also includes the nurse practitioner who provides medical services to many orphan patients. These departments will no longer be. Will these orphan patients be abandoned even more?

"Whereas the diagnostic testing and physiotherapy services will not be available in Penetanguishene and this will put a financial burden on many citizens to travel to Midland on a weekly basis for many who have no personal transportation, at a cost of \$16 to \$19;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To ensure that diagnostic testing, ultrasound, the diabetes program, dietitian counselling, nurse practitioner and physiotherapy and health and wellness services on the Penetanguishene site remain."

I'm pleased to sign that and pass it to Joseph to present to the table.

PROTECTION FOR WORKERS

Mr. Mike Colle: I have hundreds of petitions here.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas a number of foreign worker and caregiver recruitment agencies have exploited vulnerable foreign workers; and

"Whereas foreign workers are subject to illegal fees....

"Whereas the federal government in Ottawa has failed to protect" these workers....

"Whereas a great number of foreign ... caregivers perform outstanding and difficult tasks on a daily basis ... with limited protection;

"We, the undersigned, support ... the Caregiver and Foreign Worker Recruitment and Protection Act, 2009, and urge its speedy passage into law."

I support this petition and affix my name to it, along with thousands of others.

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ORDERS OF THE DAY

ONTARIO COLLEGE OF TRADES AND APPRENTICESHIP ACT, 2009

LOI DE 2009 SUR L'ORDRE DES MÉTIERS DE L'ONTARIO ET L'APPRENTISSAGE

Mr. Milloy moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 183, An Act to revise and modernize the law related to apprenticeship training and trades qualifications and to establish the Ontario College of Trades / Projet de loi 183, Loi visant à réviser et à moderniser le droit relatif à la formation en apprentissage et aux qualifications professionnelles et à créer l'Ordre des métiers de l'Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Debate.

Hon. John Milloy: It's a pleasure for me this afternoon to lead off the debate on Bill 183. At the outset, I wish to indicate to the House that I'll be sharing my time with my parliamentary assistant, the member from Richmond Hill. I want to take a second now to thank my parliamentary assistant for all the help that he's offered me in my role as minister and certainly thank him in advance for his help in terms of shepherding this bill through the system. We certainly thank him for his interest in post-secondary education, as well as the training side of things and the apprenticeship side.

The bill we have in front of us today at its core establishes the Ontario College of Trades. And by "college" we're not referring to the concept of a community college; rather, we're talking about a regulatory body similar in nature to the College of Nurses, the College of Early Childhood Educators, the Law Society of Upper Canada—the idea of a self-regulatory body which would give the skilled trades here in Ontario an opportunity to take control of their future, as it were.

I think all of us recognize the increasing importance that is played by the skilled trades here in the province of Ontario. I want to take a second to share some statistics with those who are gathered here today. The trades make up nearly 10% of Ontario's workforce, with close to half a million active, certified journeypersons in Ontario. Ontario's apprenticeship system, the system which leads one to the skilled trades, is the largest in the country. We have 120,000 apprentices learning a trade today in Ontario, in more than 150 apprenticeable trades.

The trades are diverse. They cover four sectors: construction, service, industrial, and motive power or automotive repair. Apprentices, as we all know, receive on-the-job training, as well as classroom training in a variety of training centres that include 64 community colleges.

Close to 11,500 apprentices received certificates of qualification each year for the last five years.

I think that gives a bit of a context to the members here in the chamber of how important the skilled trades are.

I also think we have to recognize that during this time of economic upheaval the skilled trades are playing an increasingly valuable role. All of us are aware of the stimulus packages that have been brought forward by our government as well as the federal government, and of the literally hundreds of thousands of jobs that are being created, many of them in the construction area, one of the most high-profile skilled trades.

Madam Speaker, as I'm sure you're aware, we're looking at an investment, announced in our budget, of \$32.5 billion in infrastructure. And I'd be remiss if I didn't mention the fact that last week I myself as well as my colleague the Minister of Energy and Infrastructure, along with our federal counterparts, spoke about 49 post-secondary education infrastructure projects across the province of Ontario—about a \$1.5-billion investment. I could go on and talk about the Green Energy Act, 50,000 jobs being created over the next three years, many again in the construction and skilled trades area.

What this means for the province of Ontario is that we need to make sure that we have more and more people going into the skilled trades in all areas but most particularly in construction. We've put it in this context. We need to make sure that these young people are receiving the proper training and that they're completing their apprenticeships.

Yet at the same time, as well as having this increasing demand, we have some demographic projections which tell a different story. More and more individuals in the skilled trades are reaching retirement age, so you have this perfect storm of an increasing demand on skilled trades and, at the same time, increasing rates of retirement.

So we have our job to do. We have to reach out and make sure that we can get young people into all areas of skilled trades and ensure that they complete their apprenticeships and receive the proper training, to ensure Ontario's prosperity.

That's the context of the challenges that are here before us, and I'm very proud to say that as a government, we've taken these challenges very seriously.

Since we took office in 2003, we've seen a dramatic increase in the number of apprenticeships here in Ontario. We have about 50,000 more apprentices today than we did when we took office. We've increased the rate of registration in our first term by 25% and set the target of increasing it by a further 25% in the mandate that has come forward. How have we done that? We've done that through a variety of policies, programs and initiatives. I'll just offer a few to the House.

We have our co-op diploma apprenticeship program, which combines a college diploma program and apprenticeship training, leading to a certificate of qualification. This offers a unique apprenticeship training experience for young people.

We have the Ontario youth apprenticeship program or OYAP, as it's known, a school-to-work transition program offered through Ontario secondary schools. It allows grades 11 and 12 students to earn co-operative education credits through work placements in skilled trades.

Our pre-apprenticeship training program helps potential apprentices develop their skills and trade readiness, to help them find work as apprentices. There's no cost to participants, who include high school graduates, early school leavers, unemployed youth and adults, aboriginal peoples and newcomers to Canada.

I'll also mention the women in skilled trades program, which offers women up to a year of in-class and on-the-job training.

Interjection: That's a very good program.

Hon. John Milloy: A very excellent program.

Following graduation, women are qualified to work in skilled trades and to enter apprenticeships.

Through incentives, we're making it easier for employers to hire apprentices, and we're enhancing these incentives to recognize the challenges they face during these difficult economic times.

Our 2009 budget, as members are aware, included funding to make the apprenticeship training tax credit the most generous in Canada. We've increased rates by 10%, and we'll double the annual maximum tax credit, bringing it to \$10,000. We will extend the ATTC, as it's known, for a year so that it can be applied to salaries and wages paid during the first 48 months of an apprenticeship program, and we're making the ATTC a permanent tax incentive.

That's a quick outline of the challenges that are facing our province in terms of recruiting more individuals to skilled trades, and some of the excellent work that I think our government has done going back to 2003.

We're here today because we believe it's time to build on this excellence and move to the next step by establishing a college of trades. I said at the outset that such a body would be a self-regulatory agency or body that would allow, in a sense, the skilled trades to govern themselves.

But just to give the Legislature a little bit of an understanding of some of the more specific things such a college would do, I'll go through a quick list of some of the categories that it would be involved with.

The first and the most important, I think, would be to promote careers in the trades and attract more people to them. This is especially important for young people so that as they're finishing high school, they see going into the skilled trades and becoming an apprentice as a real opportunity for them.

We also have to promote careers amongst under-represented groups. Unfortunately, when you look at the skilled trades, you do not see a large number of women going into many of the areas of skilled trades. You see under-representation when it comes to aboriginal peoples and people with disabilities. We have to make sure that we reach out to these groups, promote the skilled trades and allow them to complete their training.

The college would also help make it easier for internationally trained workers to get certified and find work in the trades in Ontario. We often have debates and discussion here in the Legislature about the famous doctor driving a taxicab, but we also have to make sure that if a new Canadian comes to Canada with equally valuable skills in the skilled trades, we can help remove any obstacles so that they can get the accreditation they need.

The college would set training and certification standards to serve the skilled trades sector and the public interest—again, making sure that individuals are receiving the proper training not just as apprentices but also, once they've completed their training, that they can continue to upgrade it.

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It would conduct research to help make sure Ontario has the right workers for the future. Again, here is an area I don't get particularly defensive about when the opposition or critics say we don't know enough of what is going on in our apprenticeship system. I agree, and that's why part of the mandate of a body such as the college would be to look at the apprenticeship system and do the type of in-depth research we need to make proper policy decisions.

It would give the skilled trades sector ownership of critical decisions on issues and—some of these are brought up in the House on a regular basis—compulsory certification and apprenticeship ratios, again, giving the skilled trades some ownership of these issues and allowing them to come forward with a process to deal with these fairly.

I just want to take a minute and perhaps outline to members the history of this idea of a college of trades, and then perhaps finish with a bit more detail about what the legislation in front of them contains.

Members may remember that my predecessor as Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, who is now the Attorney General, was confronted with a challenge within the skilled trades sector, and that involved the issue of compulsory certification. Members may be aware that of the 150 or so trades that exist in the province of Ontario—I think it's about 153—21 are compulsory. In other words, and I'll pick one that's very high profile, you cannot practise as an electrician unless you have actually completed the apprenticeship training program, passed the licence and received the requisite certification. It is a compulsory trade. We have 21 of those where you have to demonstrate the fact that you have completed all the licensing and all the accreditation in order to practise. The question is, should that be expanded?

A number of groups have come forward and said, "Our particular trade is so important that we believe the only way someone should be practising it is if they've gone through the system." Right now, it's what is called voluntary, which means that although people can pursue training, they can also go and hang a shingle out and call themselves a person who can perform that particular task.

The problem in the province of Ontario is that we have absolutely no process to deal with those applications. If a particular trade comes forward and says, "We wish to be seen as compulsory," there is no process for us to take a look at safety implications or economic implications and come to a conclusion.

So my predecessor, now the Attorney General, as I said, asked Mr. Tim Armstrong, the former head of the Ontario Labour Relations Board, to take a look at the whole question of compulsory certification and how the province of Ontario might come up with a process to deal with it. Mr. Armstrong conducted extensive consultations, and in the course of these consultations and discussions with ministry officials and with me, came to the conclusion that to hive off compulsory certification as one issue really didn't make a lot of sense, and that the apprenticeship system and the skilled trades training system we have in Ontario—there were a number of very different yet connected issues out there that were challenging the sector, and what would be much better would be to create this college and give the college the authority, the resources and the wherewithal to deal not only with issues of compulsory certification but with a number of issues I spoke about a few minutes ago, in terms of promotion, in terms of research and in terms of training standards etc.

Mr. Armstrong came forward with a very detailed report; I recommend it to members who are interested in it. He spoke about what a college might look like: It should have a board of governors with a balanced membership; a certification role that, together with the college name, would enhance trade status and prestige; capacity to deal with the needs of the sector; the ability to establish expert panels to consider decisions on compulsory certification as well as ratios; and a role for the college in enforcement and complaints.

We accepted Mr. Armstrong's recommendations in his report—very general in nature. We then proceeded to ask Kevin Whitaker, the current chair of the Ontario Labour Relations Board, to take a closer look at Mr. Armstrong's recommendations, go out and undertake detailed consultation with all members of the sector and come up with a proposal for a college. Mr. Whitaker undertook those recommendations—I want to thank him as well as Mr. Armstrong on the record for their very hard work and also for their thoughtfulness—and came back with a report, much of which is reflected in the legislation that is here before you.

The principle behind the college is very much about giving the skilled trades ownership, in a sense, of many of the policy questions and finding solutions to many of the challenges that come before them. But it's also to create a level playing field. I think anyone in this Legislature who has dealt with skilled trades knows that there are different perspectives that come forward, and anyone who has sat through question period and heard my critics raising various issues knows that there are different perspectives and views on many issues. What we want to do through the college is create a body which will allow

this discussion to go on, which will allow the college to adopt basic principles that are accepted by anyone so that they can look at many of these very challenging questions and complicated questions and come to the right decisions.

I just wanted to take a minute and perhaps walk members through some of the highlights of the legislation that's before them and provide a little bit of technical background as we kick off the debate today.

The proposed legislation would retain important elements but replace the existing Apprenticeship and Certification Act and the Trades Qualification and Apprenticeship Act, standardizing governance for the sector. As I say, the important elements, the basic elements, of these would be retained, but we'd try to standardize governance.

Under the bill that's in front of us, the college of trades would have a duty to serve and protect the public interest in carrying out its objectives and functions. The college's membership, if this legislation were to pass, would include certified journeypersons and persons who employ them or who sponsor or employ apprentices. The college's balanced approach to governance would consider the needs of employers, employees, apprentices and other partners. It would ensure balanced representation, including from employers and employees. It would include representatives from the industrial, service, construction and motive power sectors—all four of the skilled trades—and include non-affiliated members representing the public to bring an outside perspective to the college.

The proposed governance structure includes a board of governors, four divisional boards reflecting these four sectors, and individual trade boards for each of the skilled trades. This recognizes that some issues affect all trades while others are particular to, and may arise in only, one of the four divisions. Appointees to the college, if the legislation passes and it is established, may have particular stakeholder constituency backgrounds and would be selected based on that expertise. However, their first duty would always be to represent the public interest.

Nevertheless I think, as is normal in any decision-making process, that differences of opinion will certainly arise. So the governance structure that's outlined in the bill before us has provisions to prevent deadlock on decisions. College appointees would reflect the diversity in Ontario's society and the college's membership. They would reflect different workplace realities across the trades and appropriate proportions of unionized and non-unionized employers and employees, small and large businesses, rural and urban settings. College appointments would be made with attention to groups that have been historically underrepresented in the trades. I mentioned some of them earlier: francophones, aboriginal Ontarians, women, visible minorities and persons with disabilities.

The college of trades would also provide an open, systematic and transparent process to deal with critical

issues affecting the trades sector, including compulsory certification and apprenticeship ratios. We know that in some cases it can be difficult to achieve consensus on these important issues. Certainly, Mr. Armstrong's research noted that sometimes there's a difficulty resolving them within the current decision-making framework, and we've heard questions raised here in the Legislature about apprenticeship ratios on many occasions. I have admitted to this Legislature that the current process is not always ideal.

We went out and talked to stakeholders—Mr. Whitaker did—and stakeholders were almost unanimous in the view that neutral, objective and impartial adjudication processes were the appropriate and fair way to decide and resolve ratio disputes as well as applications for compulsory certification. Through this legislation we propose that Ontario, like other jurisdictions across Canada, implement a separate process to deal with these decisions. The college would be able to refer applications for compulsory certification or ratio reviews to three-person review panels from a roster of adjudicators who have proven their impartiality and neutrality. This process would use clear guidelines and principles for the consideration and disposition of these applications, and would draw on empirical research where necessary in coming to its decisions.

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We believe this model of decision-making would address all of the significant procedural concerns and criticisms stakeholders have had with the current system. Not only would the college set standards for its membership, it would have the ability to hold accountable to those standards. Like other regulatory professional colleges, the college would have the capacity to investigate complaints and render judgments in response to these complaints. However, I want to stress that this would not replace the role that government currently plays performing a variety of enforcement functions through the ministries of transportation, labour, and training, colleges and universities, as well as the inspections and enforcement secretariat, the Technical Standards and Safety Authority, the Electrical Safety Authority and the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board. All of those would continue in their enforcement role, and obviously the college would play a complementary and important role.

So that is a very quick overview of the context within which we're bringing forth this legislation, some of the background to its history, how we came to where we are today and a little bit of a more technical overview of what's here in the bill. As I said at the beginning, at the end of the day we always have to remember that at its core what this college of trades is about is increasing the importance of trades in our province, ensuring that young people, especially individuals from groups that aren't overly represented in the trades, see trades as a very valuable and honourable profession, and that we can have a college that allows them to address many of the concerns in the sector themselves.

With that, I look forward to continued debate and discussion on Bill 183. And as I indicated at the outset,

I'll be sharing the remainder of my time with my parliamentary assistant.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member from Richmond Hill.

Mr. Reza Moridi: At the outset, I would like to thank Minister John Milloy for his keen interest and leadership in the development of this bill; this very major, significant bill. I thank the minister for that.

I'm pleased to elaborate on Minister Milloy's remarks on the proposed Ontario College of Trades and Apprenticeship Act, 2009. As you know, if passed the act would establish the Ontario College of Trades, a regulatory college that would help modernize the province's apprenticeship and skilled trades system. It would raise the status of the skilled trades, putting them on a similar footing with teachers, doctors and nurses, all of whom have their own professional regulatory colleges. The legislation would retain important elements but replace the existing Apprenticeship and Certification Act, 1998, and the Trades Qualification and Apprenticeship Act, standardizing governance for the skilled trades sector. This would make it easier for workers, apprentices and employers alike to navigate the system, a tremendous challenge given its scope and scale. By promoting careers in skilled trades, the college would help ensure that Ontario has the skilled workforce it needs for the future—a vital concern for Ontarians.

We have heard from Minister Milloy about how we need to encourage workers to train to master the technological changes occurring in the economy, and to provide greater skilled trades training opportunities for young people, because Ontario needs more skilled workers now and in the future.

A recent Manpower Canada survey of 1,909 employers showed they are having difficulties filling jobs in the skilled trades in spite of the economic downturn. The college would help address this by making the trades attractive career destinations, by adding value and prestige to certification and by attracting groups not traditionally working in the trades or not currently participating in the workforce to their full potential.

Not only would the college help with recruitment, it would give the sector the lead in deciding how apprentices should be trained, to ensure workers are prepared to meet the needs of the new economy. This would help us make sure training standards can adapt to rapidly changing industries and labour markets. We need the skilled trades sector, through the college, to lead us in this process.

Research on governance models from other jurisdictions shows that each strives to ensure that their governance is industry-driven. This was true of regulatory colleges for professions and also for the trades governance models that we examined. After all, who knows the business of our skilled trades better than industry? The college would allow industry to exercise leadership for the trades, within a framework that balances interests and puts the public interest first, where it belongs.

The college of trades would have a duty to serve and protect the public interest in carrying out its duties. Its

membership would include both certified journeypersons and persons who employ them or who sponsor or employ apprentices.

The college's balanced approach to governance considers the needs of employers, employees, apprentices and other partners. The proposed governance structure is based on a review of models from other provinces in Canada and other countries, as well as other college models in Ontario. As Minister Milloy noted, appointments would be balanced, reflecting different workplace realities across the trades, the appropriate proportions of unionized and non-unionized employers and employees, small and large businesses, rural and urban settings. Appointments would be made with attention to groups that have been historically under-represented in the trades, targeting francophones, aboriginal Ontarians, women, visible minorities and persons with disabilities.

The college of trades would provide an open, systematic and transparent process to deal with critical issues affecting the sector, including compulsory certification and apprenticeship ratios. Stakeholders were almost unanimous in the view that neutral, objective and impartial adjudication processes were the appropriate and fair way to decide and resolve compulsory/restricted applications and ratio disputes.

The college would be able to refer applications for compulsory/restricted status and ratio reviews to review panels made up of three people from a roster of adjudicators who have proven their impartiality and neutrality. These adjudicative review panels would determine appropriate journeyperson-to-apprentice ratios and classifications of trades as compulsory or voluntary. Review panels would use clear guidelines in making these decisions. They would also be able to draw on empirical research, where necessary, in executing their duties. We believe this model of decision-making would address all of the significant procedural concerns and criticisms stakeholders have with the current system.

Not only would the college set standards for its membership, it would have the ability to hold it accountable to those standards. Like other professional regulatory colleges, the college would have the capacity to investigate complaints and render judgments in response to those complaints.

The proposed college of trades represents a logical next step in our government's agenda for the apprenticeship and skilled trades system.

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But the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities would continue to play a significant role in apprenticeship and the skilled trades. Stakeholders have agreed that the government should retain some of its current responsibilities so as to participate in and manage the broader public interest in apprenticeship and skilled trades without necessarily interfering with an industry leadership exercise through the college.

The Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities would retain functions supporting the apprenticeship system, the precertification and training phase, the registra-

tion of apprentice and employee training agreements, school scheduling, the administration of exams and the funding and recognition of training providers.

The ministry would also retain the ability to approve and fund training providers. It is appropriate that, as a funder, government would continue to exercise responsibility over the way and the manner in which training funds are disbursed.

The ministry would also retain responsibility for the creation, alteration or abolition of specific trades. Through this redistribution of responsibilities, the college of trades and the government would be able to collaborate on how best to achieve mutually agreed upon policy objectives. Each would have its own role in a modernized system, with industry playing a major, significant role.

Our government has taken, and will continue to take, significant steps to ensure that Ontario has the skilled workers it needs for the future. We have done this through initiatives to help apprentices, employers and training providers. Our record on apprenticeship is a strong one, and I want to remind you of some of our successes.

We have made a significant contribution to improving training facilities. We have created a number of programs to encourage participation in apprenticeships, and we are pleased that the ministry exceeded its apprenticeship target of 28,000 new apprenticeship registrations last year.

We are making it easier for employers to hire apprentices through incentives, and we are enhancing these incentives, the apprenticeship training tax credit, for instance, to recognize the challenges they face during difficult economic times.

This government has shown its commitment to investing in apprenticeship and the skilled trades and to helping it weather the economic downturn, but we recognize there is more to be done both by our government and by the proposed college of trades.

We need to conduct research to better determine the workers Ontario needs in the future and learn more about the complex factors influencing apprenticeship completion rates.

On completion rates, I don't want to leave the impression that our government has been idle. On the contrary, we acknowledge there is work to be done on completions and have taken steps to address this—moving forward on research to better understand the issues and to set meaningful performance targets and working proactively with apprentices and training providers to improve support for completion.

We look forward to making more progress on completions in the future and collaborating with the college on other challenges, should the legislation pass.

In short, we need to continue to provide Ontario employers, apprentices and skilled tradespeople—its training providers and its employers—with the tools they need to succeed. By giving industry a greater role in recruitment, governance, certification and apprenticeship

training, we can build on the significant role the skilled trades already play in Ontario's prosperity.

By establishing the college of trades, we would take the successes we have achieved in apprenticeship and skills training one step further.

We would draw more Ontarians to the trades, making sure Ontario has an adequate supply of workers. And we would let industry lead us in making sure these workers have the skills we need for success.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Norm Miller: It's my pleasure to respond to the minister and parliamentary assistant in their introduction of this new Ontario College of Trades bill.

The current government has been in power since 2003. All I see, on my side, are the problems, particularly to do with access to apprenticeships. Yet here they have another new bill planning on establishing this college of trades that won't do anything like changing apprenticeship ratios until 2012.

All I hear about are problems. For example, I was up at the Shawanaga First Nation, north of Parry Sound, speaking with a councillor there about what his son was up to. He said his son wanted to be an electrician—this was a year and a half ago—and the problem was, his son couldn't find anyplace to get the apprenticeship experience. That's one example.

Just this week I received a resolution from municipalities in Parry Sound, from McDougall, from Parry Sound, from Seguin township, and in it, it says, "It has come to our attention that to obtain a second apprentice in a business in some trades, you may need at least three licensed journeypeople," and it goes on and on.

It's not rocket science. The government could change those apprenticeship ratios tomorrow. It's not doing that because of its cozy relationship with unions in this province. Those are the simple facts of the matter. We're seeing young people in this province suffer because of a relationship this government has that is very detrimental to both business and the young people who are trying to develop skills in this province. I'm sure that some of our speakers, when they get a chance to talk to this bill, will bring that up. All I see are the problems that are caused by the inactions of this government.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Paul Miller: Speaking from a trades history, I went through all these changes that the government and past governments have put forth.

I see problems down the road. The college of trades is a good idea. However, a few years ago, they split the trades. There were the construction trades and then there were the industrial trades. What they did in the industrial trades was start a program called multi-crafting, which gave you several disciplines, which I went through, which allowed me to be an industrial mechanic/welder/fitter/other: hydraulics.

Now they're telling me they want to go back to the individual trades. Now that all the steel plants are closing

and all the people in industrial settings are losing their jobs, these tradespeople are going to want to go into the construction trades or other things. Is their multi-crafting now not accessible? Is it not good enough for the construction trades because they want individual trades?

The construction trades have always remained: An electrician is an electrician, a welder is a welder, and so on and so on. They haven't multi-crafted. They've had their own identity since day one.

So what is a guy going to do who got his qualifications under the law from the government as an industrial mechanic/welder/fitter? When he goes into a construction trade, are they saying that now his qualifications aren't satisfactory for that trade in construction, even though the government has given him a certification number? So I'm not quite sure how this is going to work out.

When you form these colleges—the teachers complain about their dues to the college of teachers. The nurses complain about paying into the college of nurses. And sometimes they override their authority on how these individual groups feel.

So I think that this is going to require a lot of work, and I think that the government hasn't looked at a lot of this.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member from Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock.

Mr. Rick Johnson: I'd like to thank the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities; the parliamentary assistant, the member from Richmond Hill; the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka; and the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek.

In September 2008, when the government of Ontario announced its intent to promote the skilled trades and modernize the apprenticeship system by establishing a new college of trades, it was met with much positive anticipation throughout the education system that I was involved in at the time. It reinforced the efforts that were being made by educators across Ontario to show that the skilled trades are valued.

Ten years ago, the government of the day focused on a model of student success that said if you went to university, you were a success, and if you went to college, you were a success, but it ignored the skilled trades. As the education system implemented the plan, more and more students fell through the cracks, thinking that if they didn't go to university, then somehow they weren't being successful. Bill 183 is taking great steps toward re-establishing the great value we need to place on our skilled trades and those men and women who perform that service.

1450

I was at a conference in Halifax a couple of years ago, and they said at this conference that by the year 2017, Nova Scotia anticipates that their unemployment rate in the skilled trades will be about 1%. I met a teacher there who had recently quit as a teacher to become an electrician and found her salary went from about \$60,000 a year to \$150,000 a year. So it worked great for her, and the promotion of skilled trades there is great.

The arm's-length college of trades would promote careers in skilled trades while ensuring that Ontario's skilled trades system meets the growing needs of the economy, and it would put skilled trades on a similar footing with teachers, doctors and nurses, who also have their own professional colleges.

I believe this is the right step to take at this time, and I look forward to the discussion as it moves through this house.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member for Durham.

Mr. John O'Toole: I did listen to the bill—it's an important bill, given the state of the economy today—and I believe the member for Richmond Hill delivered the remarks that were given to him. I'm not sure he's really paying attention to how important this is for young people and skilled trades development. I can only say that from what I heard from the NDP member, Mr. Miller, talking about multi-crafting—I think it's a very important and insightful remark about trying to harmonize the trades and skill sets within trades.

This function of developing a brand new college is really a tax on workers. That's really what it amounts to at the end of the day. They are self-regulatory professions today. Now they're going to have to pay a fee, and the fee is being mandated by the government and is basically a tax. I'm suspicious, because I know the experience of the past, dealing with colleges. When they changed the college of teachers, which was done as a result of the Royal Commission on Learning, they had it dominated. The majority vote was by teaching unions.

I'm afraid that these craft-based colleges that exist today under the advisory committees will be going back to these vertical, non-integrated skilled trades groups that would be more divided. The college is going to try to find consensus, but the workers out there in the field, in the shop and on the floor with the tools are going to be paying an additional tax. They aren't really going to see any direct benefit, as I see it, except that they'll be getting this bill once or twice a month for \$200 or \$300 to belong to the college, which is going to make all the rules. So I'm very suspicious at this point.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Thank you. The member for Richmond Hill has up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. Reza Moridi: I wish to thank the members for Parry Sound–Muskoka, Hamilton East–Stoney Creek, Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock and Durham, who made a contribution to this discussion.

This bill is about our young people. This bill is about tradespeople. This bill is about raising the profile and the appreciation of people who work in our industry, who are the backbone of our industry. The backbone of our economy is our workforce, and the major portion of our workforce is tradespeople, so we need to raise their profile. Society—the community—needs to recognize them in the same fashion as we appreciate doctors, dentists, nurses, engineers, lawyers etc. This bill is about raising the profile of tradespeople, and about appreciating

their contribution to our economy. That is why we have brought this bill.

On the question of ratios, I come from a teaching and training background. My past 17 years of work partly related to training. I very well understand the meaning of the teacher-student relationship and also teacher-student ratios. On this very issue, our government has actually looked into this twice and modified ratios on two occasions. But I'm afraid that in past years, when our colleagues from the Conservative Party and the NDP were in office, they never touched the ratios. Under this bill, we are proposing that expert people—review panels, as they are called—sit down and review the appropriate number of ratios for that particular trade. So the provision is there, and the bill addresses those provisions as we go on.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Further debate?

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: With Mr. Wilson not being available today, could I ask for unanimous consent of the House to defer his leadoff until another time?

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Is it the pleasure of the House? Yes. You've received that consent.

Further debate?

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I appreciate being able to speak to this bill today: the Ontario College of Trades and Apprenticeship Act, 2009. It's called An Act to revise and modernize the law related to apprenticeship training and trades qualifications and to establish the Ontario College of Trades.

I'm very, very interested in this bill. I'm like Mr. Miller and a couple of others in the House—there are only a few of us in the Legislature who come from an apprenticeship background. I think any of us, of those who are here, like to advocate on behalf of apprenticeships, because I think there's a long history of maybe what we could call some mistakes that have been made, not just in any one party but a lot of parties, and in a lot of governments, over the history of apprenticeships here in the province.

First of all, I know that the government has been saying that this bill will raise the profile of apprenticeships. I'm just curious, and I truly have no idea how a college of apprenticeships is actually going to do that, because they really don't have the funding to do that. It's going to come off the backs of the people who are paying their fees. So right off the bat, I worry about that. I would have felt that raising the profile of apprenticeships and skills development would have been the responsibility of the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities. I know they've tried their best—and there have been a number of programs introduced by all the governments. Not just this government but other governments have tried to do that. The reality is—and I think a lot of people would agree with me in this House, and I'm quite sure that people in the general public would agree with me—that there has always been a stigma attached to being someone who works with their hands or someone who

works in the trades or works in a plant, as opposed to somebody who goes on to college or university.

My own personal thought is, instead of going in the direction of a college of trades and apprenticeships, I would far rather have seen—earlier today, the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs talked about how proud the government was of creating their stand-alone Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs, and I think we all agreed with that, because it's such an important message they sent. That's the direction I would have gone in. I advocate to my caucus members and I advocate to the public on this: I believe that a stand-alone ministry of apprenticeship and skills development covers a lot more than just apprenticeship. It covers all those people in our province who may fall through the cracks as a result of not being able to afford to go on to college or university, or people who have been in trouble with the law or maybe made some stupid mistakes in their lives and moved on. I would have thought that that would have been a better direction to move in. That's my opinion. In the meantime, the government is in charge. They're listening to their consultants and their studies and they're moving ahead with this Ontario College of Trades and Apprenticeship Act.

I'll be looking forward to the committee hearings on this. I would hope that this would be a really, really important piece of legislation that would generate a lot of interest from everything from chambers of commerce and construction associations and all the different unions that would be affected. You've got 150 trades that would be included under our apprenticeship programs. So you can imagine, from the hairdressing salons—all these sorts of groups that are included in the 150 trades would be out there making sure that they could have input and making sure we get this bill really, really right. I really look forward to that, and I hope I'll be able to actually sit on that committee and create some interest in some of the things.

One of the things I do want to say, though, is that when I say maybe we haven't done everything perfect, I'm not really sure what has happened in the history of our elementary school education. There are countries in the world that promote apprenticeships right from the early years of their elementary school. They look forward, the European countries that do that. By the time you get to secondary school, they move in that direction, and people sort of know that that's the direction they're going in. I can tell you for example in Germany to be any kind of an apprentice, any kind of a tradesperson, is a very, very special job. It's got the same treatment and the same honour, having a trade, as some of the high-profile professions that we have in our country, in Ontario today. We know that's not the same with tradespeople: We know that they simply do not have the respect that they deserve—what I think they deserve, anyhow.

1500

I think the fact that over the years we've closed a number of our shops in our secondary schools—I hear that complaint all the time from the general public, especially from parents who went to shops like automotive or

home economics, or they might have gone to wood-working classes. Now they're not even available—just in a few of the schools in the province. People tell me, "Why did we ever do that? Why are we not going in that direction and helping someone out with that?" So if the college of trades and apprenticeship had advice to give, I would hope that they would give advice on those types of things too. Maybe we do need so many shops in our high schools. Maybe there should be more done—and give direction to the Ministry of Education to do something with young people even in the very early ages of elementary school. That may be an opportunity.

There's a lot to talk about here in 20 minutes. I hope, if they have a job to do and they want to promote it, if they want to promote the fact that we need more apprenticeships and we need more skills development, that they would look at the fact that there's an opportunity out there by advising the Ministry of Training, the Ministry of Education and other ministries as well—the Ministry of Labour—of things that may be wrong, and that they would listen to it very carefully, if they do, in fact, want to raise the profile.

However, what we have done I think fairly well in the province of Ontario, since I went to a trade school—I went to trade school at Humber College and took plumbing and gas fitter licences there. I went to Georgian later on to take oil burner mechanic licences, and those are the certificates that I have. One of the things I think that's really important is the fact that the community colleges have filled a gap. I think there has been a strong improvement on that in Ontario and with things like women in skilled trades, with the Ontario youth apprenticeship programs and with the programs that we have currently running in the schools.

I want to put in a word, while I've got a second here, to say some fine things about Georgian College. It's in our backyard. I have two campuses in my riding, in Midland and Orillia. We also have a campus in—

Mr. Norm Miller: Bracebridge.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I'm getting heckled by my own member, here. We have a campus in Bracebridge; I wonder who the member would be. We have one in Owen Sound. I can tell you we're very, very proud of the team Brian Tamblyn has put together. He's the president and CEO of the college and the board, the team of people they've put together. In the Midland campus in particular, it is now called a skilled trades centre.

I'm quite proud of the fact that when I became an MPP in 1999—10 years ago; I think it's tomorrow, or on Wednesday—I can tell you that our community college campus in Midland was just two rooms in the back of a radio station; today we have a skilled trades centre, and it's been a very positive influence to all of the young tradespeople who can take the different programs at the Midland campus of Georgian College. So I did want to say a few things about that.

I think one of the things, as we're talking about this bill, will be raising the profile. I'm really concerned about, as we move forward, what the actual cost of it is.

I'm hearing all kinds of numbers being tossed around here. I'm not sure, but apparently, if you talk about retired tradespeople or retired people who have taken apprentices and those currently working, it's something around 600,000 people currently in the province of Ontario who would be eligible to pay into that.

First of all, the question would be, will it be mandatory? Will it be mandatory to pay for that? I can tell you right now, tradespeople work really hard and they respect the money that they have in a meaningful way. I can tell you that they just won't want to pay any sum of money because an invoice comes in the mail—or will the government actually provide some money for start-up for that as well? But I have no idea what that cost would be. If it's \$100 a person per year, if it's \$500 or \$50 or whatever it may be, I hope that money is—the one thing we want to see at the committee hearings is an explanation from the ministry staff of what they would expect those costs to be. I want to know right now—if this bill passes, I want to be able to pass on to all the tradespeople I have in my riding, apprentices, journeymen or retirees in all the different trades, something that would indicate that I know that, if we pass this bill, they're going to be expected to pay X number of dollars towards the cost of operating this particular college—whether it be mandatory or not. Then they're going to ask me, "Well, what's going to be the advantage of this college to me? I'm already a tradesperson. I've got a job. I'm working hard. I'm raising my family. I'm raising money for my kids to go on to post-secondary education. Why do I have to pay more?" So those are the kinds of concerns I've got.

The other thing that I really think is important is the makeup of the board. If you have a board—and I understand there are going to be 21 people on the board, as I read the legislation. A total of 16 of those will be from the different broad view of trades, and five from the general public, basically. But I know there are a lot of things we have to consider. I think I heard the parliamentary assistant and the minister both talk about aboriginals, visible minorities and the francophone community. But you know what? I think you've opened up a hornet's nest with the composition of this board.

I can tell you that things like all of the construction associations that we have—the Ontario construction association, or either small or large regional construction associations—may want to have a say, groups like the Ontario Electrical League that have had a strong lobby for the changes to be made to the ratios because they simply believe the ratio system we have is completely unfair.

You talked earlier about aboriginals and we talked about women in trades. Those are all areas that, I guess, if they have the money, they can put out fancy ads like the Second Career ads. However, why is it the job of the college to emphasize the profile? I think it's the job of the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, and that's why I go back to that ministry again and talk about my original proposal. I feel that if you have a stand-alone

ministry and talk about all the people who don't go on to college or universities, that's going to raise the profile, where a minister could visit a group of students in a grade 8 class or pay far more attention, he and his staff, and actually advocate on behalf of those people moving on in the future, and maybe find out what's happening around the world and advocating, as a ministry, the same way we would expect the Ministry of Tourism or any other ministry—the Ministry of Culture—these organizations that go out there and try to promote what they do and what's good about Ontario etc. I think there's an opportunity, so I'm putting in my two cents' worth here. I think that a stand-alone ministry of apprenticeship and skills development is still a very, very positive way to go.

I've only got seven minutes left here, and I'll try to wrap this up. However, one of the things that I found fairly interesting as I looked through this was the apprenticeship ratios, and I'm going back to that for a moment. There have been a couple of occasions here—I know when the former member from Haliburton-Victoria-Brock, Ms. Scott, was here, she tried to get the apprenticeship ratios changed to 1-to-1 on a resolution. The government, of course, turned it down. They said, "We're going to wait until our bill comes out on the college of trades and apprenticeship, and then that's when we'll deal with those kinds of things." But what they do in this bill—that board isn't going to decide anything; they're going to go to what they call an expert panel. After they decide that they might change the ratios—they might consider changing the ratios—then they're going to go to this expert panel. We keep hearing "expert panel" on every piece of legislation this government brings forward, but that's who's going to make the determination.

1510

My question is, who's going to make up the expert panel? Will it be people who are biased towards having changes made at all? I think the minister and the government will have to answer a lot of questions when it comes to those types of changes, because I think it's so important that if organizations have a reasonable request of government to change the ratios, they are in fact allowed to do so in a very transparent manner, with proper reasons for why things are a certain way and why they're not and move in that direction.

I also want to say, as we discuss this bill, that when we talk about apprenticeship ratios, I believe that's a lot of what triggered this legislation today, because there were certain groups, most of them led by the large unions that simply—and I met some of the guys from the large unions out here in the hallways. They had their reasons.

Of course I met people from the Ontario Electrical League and associations like that who believe that the 3-1 ratio is simply completely unfair. It would be different if it was the same across the country, but it's not the same across the country.

Young people in the province of Ontario are discriminated against as far as apprenticeship ratios are concerned, because they are not treated the same as other

young people across our country. I think we mentioned that if it's okay in Moncton or it's okay in Vancouver or Edmonton, why do we have to be different here in the province of Ontario? The excuse that keeps coming back is that it's for safety, we're an unsafe society here, something like that. I'm not sure what the answer really is.

But I think that as we move through this legislation and we look at the future, one of the things that will be high profile from a number of the organizations that will approach the committee will be discussing apprenticeship ratios and what we would consider to be an unfair system as opposed to other provinces. Now, if the other provinces are somehow made—by federal legislation or whatever it may be—to change, then okay, that would put us on equal ground, but we all know that won't happen.

The reality is that we have a job to do here, and if this is going to go forward, we want to make sure that the bill is right and it's transparent and that all Ontario citizens are welcome to be on that board.

Now, the other thing I didn't hear mentioned was geography, the makeup of the board and how it's affected by the geography of the province. We want people from the north on the board. We want people from all over, all parts of the province of Ontario.

The bill gets fairly specific in some areas about the makeup of the board etc., but I don't see why we can't have those types of things like geographical, the makeup of the board as far as visible minorities, women etc. right in the legislation so that everyone would understand upfront, and who will actually choose these people in the long run.

If we have our first one or two choices as we move forward with the selection of the board, maybe it could be done by a committee of this Legislature, where you have input from three political parties and they have the opportunity. Maybe that's the type of thing we could do to make it even more transparent. So I look forward to those kinds of comments as well.

Finally, I just want to say to people—and I see there's a lot of young people in the audience today; they're probably wondering what they're all going to do with their careers—you know what? Don't be afraid to take up a trade. I know it's nice to go on to college and university, but if you have the opportunity to work in the trades, there's an amazing number of people.

I was working in the trades for 25 years before I came to Parliament 10 years ago. One of my favourite things to do in the city of Toronto today is to go to those construction sites and look down where they're digging the huge holes and excavating deep into the ground. They build parking lots down there. It's just an amazing thing, the quality of the tradespeople we have here in Ontario.

I should also point out there's kind of a bonding of people in the trades as well. No matter what the trade may be, I would say that it's a really good opportunity, and I would highly recommend that you look at that as a potential career as well.

Finally, I look forward to this legislation being, again, at the committee level. I think there are some wonderful

opportunities for improvement, but I do want to say in the end, I think that the government—in the minister's speech and the parliamentary assistant's speech—may be emphasizing a little too much on the profile that this legislation will raise to the trades. I think it's up to us here. I think the ministries have to do the job, they have to promote the trades, and it goes right back to all of the different levels of education, whether it be post-secondary or elementary, the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Labour, all the different ministries. They can do a better job than this college can.

Thank you very much for the opportunity to say a few words today.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I will be speaking in approximately 12 minutes, and I will try to cover as much as I can, because there are a number of issues that need to be addressed.

There were two comments the member from Simcoe North made that I wanted to speak to. One is the value for money in terms of how much tradespeople are going to have to be paying to be members of the college of trades. If there is any guide in terms of historical precedence, the teachers started paying \$100 when they established the college of teachers, and they are now paying, I think, \$135 a year.

But I think the new college of trades and the government are going to have to explain what it is that they're getting out of that fee. I think the member from Simcoe North makes the point. I don't have any problem with people paying a fee for the college, except they'll have to be convinced that what they're getting is useful and/or efficacious in some way or another for their trade. They're going to have to persuade us as to why that is the case. We don't know how much they'll be paying just yet. I think the government members know, but they don't want to tell us. But that's okay; we'll find out soon enough.

The other issue I wanted to speak to briefly—and if I have time I'll speak to it when I have my hour, in about 10 minutes—is the whole issue of the ratio between journeypersons and apprentices. I know the Conservatives are very fond of this. That's one of the issues that they speak of frequently. But the Canadian Federation of Independent Business says that one of the main challenges faced by young business in providing apprenticeship training, and the issue that the Conservatives bring to the table in terms of the real problem being the ratio, is number 4 on their list in terms of what other obstacles there are. I will speak to that later, but I wanted to touch on it, to the member of Simcoe North, in the brief two minutes.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member from Richmond Hill.

Mr. Reza Moridi: I wish to thank members from Simcoe North and Trinity-Spadina, particularly the member from Simcoe North, who brought his own experience as a former tradesperson to this House.

This bill is really about modernizing the apprenticeship system and the legislation in Ontario. As you know very well, now we have two bills, two acts, basically. One is the Apprenticeship and Certification Act, 1998, and the other one is the Trades Qualification and Apprenticeship Act. These are two acts which are governing apprenticeship in this province. One of them is governing part of the trades, the other one is governing the other parts, and there are even some contradictions among them.

For example, in one act the minimum entry qualification is grade 10; in the other act the minimum entry qualification is grade 12. So we want to modernize the act and the legislation on this very important matter for our economy, for our young people. That is the real intent of this act.

On the question of governance, as the member from Simcoe North mentioned, the board of governors of this college is going to be composed of 21 people. Five of them will be lay people, lay persons, and of the remaining 16 people, half of them are going to be drawn from the workers and the other half from the employers. So this is going to be a balanced board of governors, and the members who are going to represent the board are going to come from various industries, as we will have four industry sectors: construction, industry, service and motive power. So these industry groups, both from the employer side and employee side, are going to be represented in the board of governors, and they may come from various geographic parts of the province—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Thank you. The member from Nepean-Carleton.

1520

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I'm very pleased to join the debate today and congratulate my colleague Garfield Dunlop for the work that he has done in promoting the idea that we in this chamber need to seriously address the ratios in our apprenticeships across this province.

The one thing the member asked me to do before all these young ladies and young men leave is to ask them to consider a job in the trades if they're not bound for university immediately or at all.

It's very important work that we're confronted with, regardless of where we live across this great province, whether you're in Simcoe county or in Carleton county.

Of course, there are a few members here from Ottawa, and we're very proud of our Algonquin College, which will have its trades school.

There's no question that we need to be focusing on the trades. Improving the apprenticeship ratios is, of course, a primary concern.

I want to congratulate the Ontario Electrical League for the great work they have been doing in bringing this issue to this chamber for as long as I have been elected and, of course, probably long before I was, and they will continue to speak for the folks they represent long after many of us here have left.

There is no doubt that we have concerns with this legislation. I think my colleague aptly pointed out that we

are concerned with the composition of the board. Our critic, Jim Wilson, a former minister of the crown himself, was concerned about this bill, and he said, "The driving force behind this legislation comes from members of the Working Families Coalition, who are intimate friends of this government and who have worked with the Liberals to carefully craft rules and programs to exclude anyone who is not in their club."

The onus is now on the McGuinty Liberals to prove to us that that is not the case with this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek.

Mr. Paul Miller: I'd like to thank the member for Trinity–Spadina for his infinite wisdom; the member for Simcoe North, as a fellow tradesman; and the member for Richmond Hill for his scholastic background.

I stand here and I listen to this. I am in favour of a college to oversee the trades, because it's long overdue. It has been a horror story out there for many years, where non-union, union, vice versa—people who weren't skilled and certified in their trades were working on buildings and there were problems. There were fires, there were structural problems. We need a body to oversee that. I don't have a problem with that.

What I have a problem with is, what are you going to do, as I mentioned before, with the people who were in an industrial setting, which was separate from a construction setting under its mandate? You're now going to take the tradesmen from the industrial section and put them into the construction section, or vice versa, because they can't get jobs in their fields and they're going to go there. Are you going to grandfather their skilled multi-trades, or are you going to say that their initial trade was okay but the ones they had gathered over the years, which were certified by the government, are not good enough now? In some of the reading here, I'm seeing that they're feeling they may be weak in their successive trades rather than their original trade because they hadn't been exposed to as much training in those other trades, but they still are guaranteed under the law and certified to work in those trades.

What they did under multi-crafting a few years ago—the companies pushed that so they could send a group of four guys out. Instead of sending four carpenters, they could send a welder, a rigger, an ironworker and a carpenter, and they could get the best bang for their buck because the guy in that discipline would lead that party in that particular trade when they were doing a certain job. So they could all function and help in other trades, and they picked up a lot.

What is this body going to do about those things? Are they going to grandfather all the information those people have gained over the years?

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member for Simcoe North has up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I'd like to thank the parliamentary assistant from Richmond Hill and my colleagues from Nepean–Carleton, Trinity–Spadina and Hamilton East–Stoney Creek for their comments today.

The final thing I wanted to bring to this bill is that I'm interested in hearing, during the debate, about the whole world of inspections. We've got these colleges of engineers; we've got colleges of doctors, physicians and surgeons; we've got colleges of nurses and teachers. They all have this body that oversees and helps with their particular careers. But the tradespeople, particularly in the construction and manufacturing trades, are required on a day-to-day basis to be working under inspections of building construction or engineering construction, those types of things. I'm curious when there will be more trust given to the trades. For example, if you're doing an electrical job, you're taking on a contract for electrical, you have to go and get an inspection. Someone from the Electrical Safety Authority comes and inspects it, and they carry on and do their work. So there's almost like a lack of trust. Here's a professional tradesperson, able to do his job, out there doing his job, but he has to have an inspection. Other areas don't; for example, nurses, teachers and doctors. I'm curious where the government will go with that when those kinds of questions come up. Will the college of apprenticeships be able to manoeuvre so they will make it easier for job sites, so that we may not need as many inspections when there should be a trust factor with these very highly skilled tradespeople? That's just something I want to throw out there because I think it's important to look at these sorts of things as we move forward with this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member from Trinity–Spadina.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: It's a pleasure to speak to this bill, the Ontario College of Trades and Apprenticeship Act, that has been introduced by this government. I'm going to refute as best as I can some of the comments made by the member from Richmond Hill. I'll quote him, because the member from Richmond Hill said, "Our record on apprenticeship is impressive." It's actually not impressive at all, and I want to speak to that. The member from Richmond Hill also said, "We have made a serious commitment to investing in this field." I just don't see it, and I'll speak to that. He also said, on the issue of completion rates, that they have not been idle, but they have, and I will speak to that. He also said, "We will draw more Ontarians to the trades." I don't think they've done a good job of that in the past, so I'm not quite sure how they're going to do that, except it's possible that the college of trades may succeed where the government failed. But I'm not persuaded.

I welcome the citizens of Ontario to this program, to this political forum. We're on live, it's 3:25 and it's Monday. We welcome you because this, as with so many other issues, is so important. I'm sure there a lot of people, tradespeople, watching this program right at this moment. Hopefully they're working, but if they're not, they're probably interested in watching this program, because they want ideas, suggestions as to how they can get back into the employment sector.

I want to start first of all by talking about what the member from Simcoe North said about why the trades

are important, and they are. I wish I had a trade other than having been a teacher in the past and being a politician. I wish I had a trade where I could actually use my hands in some skilful way. I always wanted to be a carpenter: fine work, not rough. Fine-work carpentry, versus rough carpentry. This is not a criticism of those who do rough carpentry, but rather what I would have liked to be. I have to tell you that the trades ought not to be for those who are dropping out and ought not to be for those who simply are not making it academically in the school system, but that's what it turns out to be all of the time, including the stereotypes around some racial and linguistic communities. I always make fun of the fact that when the Italians came in the late 1950s and early 1960s, so many young Italians were streamed into the trades. I call it streaming. It's not just me calling it streaming but many calling it streaming. It's been studied in terms of class issues. Those who were not born into professional classes and into a moneyed class were streamed nicely into vocational schools on the basis that we were good with their hands. People say that. If you speak to some of the Italians who went through the high school system, who were driven, streamed into the vocational schools, they were told by guidance teachers that they might want to pursue a trade because they were good with their hands.

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You can see why so many of us became averse to the whole issue of trades and why so many of our fathers and mothers wanted us to go into academics versus the trades? It wasn't seen well to be going into the trades by the very people who were streaming into them. In fact, the very people who were in the trades didn't want their children to be in the trades. I'm not saying it was good that mothers and fathers wanted us to go into different fields, and I'm not saying it was good for guidance counsellors to stream us into the trades rather than into academics. I thought it was terrible.

Does it still go on? I suspect it does, but they use much better euphemisms today. Nobody is going to say, "You're good with your hands." As a whole ethnic community, nobody would say that. Teachers are better trained today than they were in the past. In the past they would have said it and it would have simply been accepted; you know how it was. Everybody would have said, "Yeah, they're good with their hands." Mercifully, they don't do that anymore, thank the Lord.

So I had an allergy toward the trades when I was a school trustee. I fought streaming because I felt that everyone has the ability to go where they want if given adequate resources and supports in the educational system. The point is that if you don't give them the support, you quite naturally separate people into streams. So the wealthy go into academics, by and large, even if they're not very smart; the kids of the professional classes automatically go into the academic class, because they're given certain privileges by the mere nature of where they come from; and the others are streamed into the vocational schools.

In Toronto we almost eliminated the vocational schools. It started with Portuguese-Canadian parents discovering that when their kids went into vocational schools, they probably would never end up in university. That's why you went to vocational schools; it meant you had a couple of years of high school life and then you dropped out. The majority of them would not likely go to community colleges either, or would end up in a college but never a university. When they discovered that going to vocational school didn't lead to university, they were angry as hell. In their mobilization against it, they eventually closed down some of the vocational schools.

Interjection.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I'm sure it's okay to say that. I'm sure, unless you think otherwise.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Actually it's not. I would ask the member to withdraw that.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: They were angry as heck, I guess. I withdraw the "hell" part.

They were angry, and justifiably so. Because of their anger and the mobilization of the entire Portuguese community, they helped to close down Bickford and Brockton. Was it good? Well, for the parents it was. It might not have been a good thing to have done, had we changed Bickford and Brockton in terms of what we could have done. But to use them as high school grounds for a whole Portuguese community and black kids who ended up largely in Bickford and Brockton, it was the wrong thing to do. So I fought it. I fought streaming for that very reason when I was a school trustee.

Do we need a rethink on this? Absolutely. I believe the trades ought to be promoted, and should be promoted by everyone. They should be promoted by governments, by the trades and by business. The Canadian Federation of Independent Business says that governments should be promoting the trades. I say, why don't they promote the trades as well? Why is it left to me and to government members and to the government in particular, which I endorse, to promote the trades? Why can't we all be doing this together, as opposed to simply government, as if it automatically has the only obligation to promote the trades? It shouldn't be, but it is, and I can tell you that governments have done a poor job of promoting the trades. This is one of the criticisms of this government and of previous ones to boot. But the Liberals have done absolutely nothing in this regard—absolutely nothing.

Will the college of trades change that? I quite frankly don't know. I really don't. The government would be very happy to say, "The college of trades will do it," and simply absolve themselves from the responsibility to do so, but the college of trades will not have the money to be able to promote them. I know they will—and to the extent that they can, they will—but governments should help out in terms of promoting the trades.

How are they not promoting the trades by their actions, in addition to what I said? Well, they virtually eliminated industrial arts, the Liberals have. I mean, the Tories began their work, but the Liberals completed it, literally completed it.

Interjection.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Well, they started, and you helped to complete, the decimation of those programs.

Mr. Dave Levac: They're coming back.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: No, they're not coming back.

Interjection: Yes, they are.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: No. Home economics, tech—

Mr. Dave Levac: Industrial arts.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: —industrial arts, I said. Home economics; tech and home economics, different terms that have been used over the ages. They have literally disappeared from our elementary system.

Interjection.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: The Liberals will have a couple of minutes, if not 20. You will have 20 minutes to tell me how you've done that. Will you call Mike and tell him Dave Levac wants to speak to this bill? He needs 20 minutes to help me out.

I am assuring you citizens that the Liberals have not given any funding whatsoever to keep an interest in this field, both for young men and women. This isn't a program just for men. It's a program that belongs to women and men, and this isn't just a program for the poor and for those who don't do well; it's for everyone. Wouldn't it be nice if lawyers could work with their hands and do some carpentry and electrical work? Most of them can't. I can't, and I know most academics, most professionals can't. Wouldn't it be nice if we said to all of our student body, "You should all be learning how to do a bit of electrical, plumbing, carpentry"? It would be great for us all. We would be, in my mind, better human beings. But we don't promote it.

How does it help to rid ourselves of these programs that give a little incentive to the students to get to know some of these programs in the elementary grades? Once you Liberals have eliminated, virtually decimated, all these programs from our elementary school curriculum, how do we give incentives to students to know—how do they learn, how do they begin to think there is something more than just reading and writing, that we could actually do a couple of things with our hands and enjoy it?

I am saying to the government that they have failed us utterly in so many aspects of what they are doing. I look forward to the Liberals correcting me, to tell me what they've done and what they're doing, because I've got to tell you, when they close Timothy Eaton—the Toronto Board of Education is closing Timothy Eaton, a state-of-the-art high school in the technical area of things. This is where you want to be able to say, "Send the kids there." This is where the government, through Kathleen Wynne, the minister, should say, "We're not closing that school down. We're going to give all the support to the Toronto board to make sure it stays." State-of-the-art technology, and it's going to close because the enrolment is only about 23%, 26% of capacity. How do you shut down a high school like that? And not a word from Kathleen Wynne, the minister, or any other Liberal member that I'm aware of; not a word.

Do you understand? I raise these issues as a way of saying that the Liberals have no commitment to this issue—none. Timothy Eaton—

Interjection.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: You've got 20 minutes, some of you. Use it up. Go talk to Mike Colle, the whip, and tell him you want to speak, because you've got a lot to say on this, right?

Interjection.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Don't speak just for 10, speak for 20 and speak to these issues that I'm addressing here, because I want to hear from you, and if you only take 10, ask some other member to speak to some of the issues I'm raising. You want to defend yourselves; if you don't defend yourself and you allow me to criticize you, it's not good for you. You know that. So address some of the issues that I have raised and tell me how the government is going to say to the Toronto board, "We're going to save Timothy Eaton because we believe in the trades, we believe in keeping it open and we believe that once you spend the millions of dollars to put it there, we want to keep it open. We're going to promote it and make sure that kids and students end up there."

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Stand up and speak a little bit about some of these things. Don't just shy away. Don't just be told by the whip and the House leader, "No; we're not going to say very much. Keep it low-key, and talk about the college; it's really great," and blah, blah, blah; speak about the real issues. Speak about what you're doing that actually promotes the trades, so that once the college is set up, you've got a base from which to work.

I am saying that what the member from Richmond Hill speaks of in terms of our record on apprenticeship as being impressive is totally, totally wrong. It's just blah, blah, blah that the government members use to be able to inflate themselves without deserving it. I have to tell you, it enrages me a little bit because when it's disconnected from reality, then I say to myself: "They're making it up; they're manufacturing something that isn't real." And if you're manufacturing something that isn't real, it ticks me off, you understand. I suspect—"ticked me off" is okay, right?—that the citizens of Ontario would be ticked off too if they knew.

Let me tell you a little bit about what the Auditor General says about some of these inflated remarks made by the member from Richmond Hill—nothing against the member; he's a nice man. That's not the issue. The issue is not whether he's nice or not; the issue is the language that has been given to him by the ministry to articulate, to make it appear like they're actually doing something—and they're not. The Auditor General says many things. I have to—for the pleasure of the citizens—put this on the record. I will summarize the points and then one by one give a little meat to it, and then I will have a few other things to say.

The main audit point—and I've got to say I really appreciate the auditor, and the previous one and the current one; they do an amazing job. They really do. We

need to have them because they unearth so much that is good, not just for the opposition but for the government members too, if they actually did what he said. If they actually did what the auditor said, they should be happy as well, but because the Auditor General presents a report in a way that criticizes the government, they feel they have to skulk under the carpet. The reason why they skulk under the carpet is because they never act on the recommendations made by the auditor. If they did, they would be proud to say, "By the way, on number one issue and number two and number three, we've done the following." They hardly ever do. They always do something just before we go to committee when we are actually dealing with these issues. Have you ever noticed? That's what I am noticing. Every time we deal with these issues that the Auditor General has dealt with, all of a sudden, lo and behold, God bless, the ministry comes up with recommendations to actually respond to it. Then they make it appear as if somehow they are leading on that particular issue as opposed to being told by the Auditor General, "You didn't do this; you didn't do that." So they make it appear like they actually did it themselves. It's a very neat little trick, but anyway.

The auditor says, in terms of the main points, that on apprenticeship training, the ministry increased apprenticeship opportunities and registration but was less successful in ensuring that apprentices complete the training. You remember: The member from Richmond Hill says, "We have not been idle." The Auditor General says they've been idle for quite some time. Expenditures increased 25% since 2002. The number of registered apprentices more than doubled to 109,000, but the ministry lacked "information on completion and employment rates and on the reasons why a high percentage of apprentices fail to complete the training"—and, by the way, fewer than half completed the training—"and become certified." So I'll speak to that in a little while.

Another highlight: Staff say that too much emphasis is on registration over certification. You understand what that means? It means that the government is busy saying, "Oh my God, we have thousands of people registering," as a way of inflating the number of people who register, but only half of them complete the program. So you always get from the government all the high numbers about how many people register, and they never talk about completion. Have they been idle? Yes, siree.

Lack of "strategies to increase registrations in high-demand skilled trades." I like this one, and I'm going to get to this very shortly: Most registration increase "has been in the expanding services sector, including call-centre and customer service trades."

You remember, Madam Speaker, when I raised questions in this House about the call centres. They got \$5,000 a pop in Ottawa. I asked the minister, "What kind of training do you do?" Well, what kind of training do they get for \$5,000 a pop?

Interjection: "Hello."

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Pretty well: "Hello, how are you doing?" You call so-and-so, and presumably that's it,

and it's classified as a trade. That company got \$5,000 a pop for I think 1,000 workers. Six months later or a year later, they left: Sayonara with our money and sayonara with all that great training that they provided. The government is quite happy to say, "Oh, so many registrants in these new trades." Call centre: "Hello." It's really bizarre.

Lack of coordination in safety enforcement efforts. Some trades "restricted for workplace and public safety reasons" must be monitored and enforced to prevent "uncertified individuals from working in" those trades.

Those are some of the highlights, and then I'll have a little comment on the skills development and self-employment program. But I really want to get to the comments of the member for Richmond Hill on this, because he elaborates nicely and speaks to, "Our record on apprenticeship is really impressive."

The next page, audit observations and conclusions from the auditor:

"The apprenticeship program is governed by two acts. The Trades Qualification and Apprenticeship Act (1990) ... and the Apprenticeship and Certification Act, 1998....

"Apprenticeship is a work-based training model that combines on-the-job training (approximately 90%) with classroom training (approximately 10%). The length of an apprenticeship can range from two to five years, during which time the apprentice must typically complete at least three in-school training sessions."

The training agreements or contracts are signed by apprentices and employers "and filed with the ministry" before registration. A journey person is someone who has "completed all the requirements and acquired a certificate of qualification or certificate of apprenticeship (or both)" for the training. The ministry has "100 training consultants ... in 26 field offices" providing "services such as registering apprentices and consulting with the training providers and ... employers." There are about 34,600 employers.

Understand that there are 100 training consultants in 26 field offices that provide "services such as registering apprentices and consulting with the training providers and ... employers." How can they do that? How can 100 consultants do this work involving 35,000 employers all over 26 field offices across Ontario? Remember, Ontario is two times bigger than Italy. It's a pretty big place. A hundred consultants—it's totally inadequate, and that's what we've had for a long, long time.

Developments in the apprenticeship program since the auditor's last audit: Since 2002, when the Tories were in power, "ministry expenditures ... have increased ... from \$81 million to \$101 million." It's a 25% increase. "As of June 2008, the number of active trades has increased ... from 136 ... to 153" trades—which is a 12% increase—"and the number of registered apprentices has more than doubled ... to 109,000. The government" plans "to increase annual registrations ... to 32,500 by 2011." That's a 25% increase. "The ministry has ... revised" many "training standards, curricula, and examinations" as recommended by the auditor.

You see how the registrants increase yearly? Not completed very much, but increase yearly? A hundred consultants to go and provide services to help out: not adequate.

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We've been increasing these trades, and the worry that we have is that we used to have a whole trade, where you trained in one field, and it was a very complete trade; what they're doing now is fragmenting the existing trades, so instead of having one full trade, they break it up into two, three or four pieces. They're fragmenting the trades. What they're doing, in my view, is de-skilling the trades, and it's a serious worry. These trades increase, but they are increasing through further fragmentation of the trades. I'm worried about what they're doing in that regard, and I know the trades are worried about that as well, but nobody seems to know what they're doing because nobody gets into the details of these issues except the unions that are actively involved in these particular areas, particularly where they're certified.

Tracking completion rates: The ministry needs "information on apprenticeship completion and employment rates in relation to labour market demand," says the auditor. It agreed to implement outcome-based measures by 2004 and report after this. "To date the Ministry has publicly reported only on the number of annual apprenticeship registrations," which is what I said earlier. So when the government members say, "We've done a lot on this area since 2002"—very little; I would almost say nada, but you can't completely say that, because they must have done something. But since 2002, very little data on completion rates, but they're very happy to report how many have registered.

Here's another fact: The Centre for the Study of Living Standards reported in 2005 that Ontario had the third-lowest apprenticeship program completion rate—32%—among the 10 provinces. The construction and food and service trades sectors had the lowest completion rates in Canada. Industrial electrician, ironworker, industrial mechanic and mobile crane operator had the highest completion rates. But do you see, in the other areas, how low we are on the completion rates? And we've done so little to deal with that.

The ministry last surveyed why apprentices and journeypersons left apprenticeship—oh, I've got another stat, sorry, before I get to that. Stats Canada studies, which use a different method of determining completion rates, released in 2007 and 2008 completion rates for apprentices in New Brunswick, Alberta and Ontario who registered in 1992 and 1993, and found that "completion rates were 59% in Alberta, 50% in Ontario, and 47% in New Brunswick," and the construction trades had the lowest completion rates. We don't have a great record to speak of. We don't have a great record to be proud of.

The ministry last surveyed why apprentices and journeypersons left apprentice programs before completion in 1997, when the Tories were in. The three most common reasons were "limited employment opportunities or employment instability, dislike of the work or trade

followed by finding another job, and unsuitable training." These were the five categories identified a long time ago.

"In 2005, the minister's action table on apprenticeship was formed," and the committee suggested strategies for improving completion rates, including the following:

- ensuring that in-school training is relevant, current, and of appropriate duration;

- ensuring that examinations are appropriate;

- improving the tracking and monitoring of apprentices as they progress through their programs, and providing supports such as counselling...; and

- implementing a program to help employers be good trainers and to improve the connections between workplace and in-school training content."

This recommendation was made in 2005, and we have little to show by way of what has happened since. So much for the stellar record of the government.

On-the-job training, with respect to monitoring program quality and compliance: The ministry still has not developed policies on monitoring in-school or workplace training consultants. The auditor recommended this be done in the 2002 audit, a while ago, seven years ago. Although consultants are required to monitor compliance with training agreements and regulations, consultants feel that their priority is "meeting the apprenticeship registration targets, and that there is too much emphasis on quantity and not quality." You understand? These are the consultants saying this, according to the auditor. They say that their priority is meeting the apprenticeship registration targets, suggesting to me in the language, member from Richmond Hill, that the target is not how many of the programs the students complete but rather how many register, because you, government, want to look good about how many are applying to get in. And it's not me saying it; it's the Auditor General, who has much more credibility than those of us whose job it is to be critical of the government.

Consultants are also concerned that the increase in caseloads has eliminated time to work with existing apprentices or employers. The number of consultants, the 100 of them, remember, has remained constant since the 2002 audit, while the caseloads have nearly doubled, averaging 900 to 1,000 apprentices per consultant. Consultants listed several implications, including lack of monitoring of employer training and their belief that apprentices lack sufficient contact with consultants necessary to motivate apprentices to complete programs. So I say this as a way of saying to the government that you've done a really poor job. As we move to the college of trades, I say to myself, will all this improve, and will the college of trades find success where the government has failed? I don't know. One can only hope and be optimistic, because what other choice do we have? The reason why the government promotes the college is because of their abject failure, on the hope that the college of trades will do what they didn't, couldn't and did not want to do. We'll see.

In-school training and support for exams: What does the auditor have to say? "The ministry funds 65 training

providers (24 colleges and 41 union- or employer-sponsored training centres) to deliver the in-school portion of the apprenticeship program." Training consultants must "monitor the quality of classroom training relative to industry standards for each trade." Remember, the consultants don't have the time; they're too busy meeting their targets on registration. There have been so many more that have come in registering, they don't have the time to monitor the classroom training.

Over the past three fiscal years, the overall pass rate for in-school programs was approximately 90%. So the in-school program works well. But over the last five years, the pass rate on examinations for certification of qualification was approximately 50%. So something is wrong. They do well in their training, but when they write their exams they can't do it. There is a problem there that has not been solved by the government over the many years that this has been identified as a problem. The minister's action table on apprenticeship questioned whether the right things are being examined and whether the in-school programs are long enough to ensure success. Much material tested on the examination is based on training provided on the job.

Addressing skill shortages: The ministry has increased annual apprenticeship registrations by 64% since the 2002 audit. So they do well there. They promote that, and they've got targets, evidently. The ministry has added 20 new apprenticeship trades over the past five years, to bring the total to 153 in four sectors: construction, industrial, service, and motive power. "The largest increase in registrations has been in the service trades," says the auditor, like the call centres. The results of expanding into new trades such as call centres have been mixed. And he says, in brackets, that many call centre trades apprentices quit during the first six months of employment. This expansion "has helped meet labour market needs in some areas, but has not addressed the skilled worker shortage" for plumbers, industrial and construction electricians, steamfitters and others.

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So I say to myself, what has the government done to make sure that we are training people for those trades that pay well, that are unionized, that we want, where there is a shortage and will be a future shortage in the next 10 years as some of the skilled tradespeople retire? What is the government doing about that? Très, très peu, je dis.

Hon. James J. Bradley: What does that mean?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: You've got to put your earpiece in, Jim.

So what they've done is expand the service sector, like the call centres, where they pay little, and give a whole lot of money to employers who close shop and depart to another jurisdiction. That's the extent of what this government is doing.

Did you know that of the highest 10 trades in terms of registrations, number 3 is hairstylists? I'm not knocking hairstylists, because I think we need them—although my hairstylist can't do much with me, so a haircut will do

just fine. A whole lot of people need hairstyling, to be sure. We need them. But of the 10 highest trades in which people register, hairstyling is number 3. Yikes. There must be a demand, and that's fine, but the government must promote those trades where we know by the studies that there is a shortage today and there's going to be a shortage 10 years from now.

So as this economy recovers, will the college of trades solve what the government has not been able to do since they got elected in 2003? All I can say is, I hope so. But to date, their record is not stellar.

On the enforcement of legislation on restricted trades, the auditor noted that "21 trades in the construction, motive power, and service sectors" are "designated as restricted to certified tradespersons.... Restricted trades include such occupations as automotive technician and construction electrician...."

"In August 2007, the minister appointed Tim Armstrong—a former deputy minister—"to conduct a review of expanding compulsory certification for trades." His 2008 report said that "requirements for compulsory certification will not be fully effective unless there are comprehensive enforcement mechanisms, accompanied by meaningful sanctions, to deter widespread contravention...." On site visits "to motive power shops, training consultants have found ... unlicensed workers ... doing restricted work illegally."

That is the record of the government. Will the college of trades solve a problem this government has not been able to deal with and has been unwilling to deal with for all these years? All I can say is, I hope so. If we left it to this government, we'd have the same problems that were identified by the auditor in 2002, that he identified again in 2007 and that he will do again in who knows how many years from now, except that the intervention of the establishment of the college of trades might settle this problem for the government, because they can now say, "Go to the college of trades," I imagine.

There's another little problemo, the apprenticeship training tax credit. The government introduced this tax credit in 2004 "to encourage employers to hire apprentices in certain skilled trades. An employer is eligible for a maximum tax credit of \$5,000 per year to a maximum of \$15,000 for the first 36 months...."

Remember me telling you—hello?—about the call centres? Five thousand apiece, to a maximum of \$15,000 for the first 36 months. Not bad, if you can get money just to be trained to answer the phone. "In the 2008 budget, the government extended the ATTC by four additional years to 2015."

Most eligible trades—the final approval rests with the Ministry of Finance—"are in the motive power, construction and industrial sectors...."

"The ministry has not yet obtained any current information" from the Ministry of Finance "on the level of activity in each trade or trade sector."

I mention this because when I questioned Mike Colle, who was then the minister, and his deputy—both new at the time; it wasn't his fault and it wasn't the

deputy's fault—they didn't have a clue. I said, "Do you have this information?" They said, "No, the Minister of Finance does." I said, "You're the minister. How come you don't have this information?" They said, "Well, it's the Minister of Finance who deals with that." I said, "Shouldn't you be asking for and collecting this information?" I asked them to get it, right? Of course, I never got anything. I'm not sure whether the then-minister got anything.

Then, interestingly enough, when we dealt with this auditor's report but a short couple of weeks ago, we had a new deputy with, yes, a new minister, and a new minister many years before these other two and a new deputy then—they all seem to be new. Every year or two, everybody is new and none of them has a handle on what to do with these trades. No wonder they have such a poor record in this particular ministry.

So I asked the same questions of the deputy minister: "Do you have this information? Are you connecting to this other ministry, as the Auditor General said?" As of a couple weeks ago when I asked this question, they didn't have any information from the Minister of Finance. So you've got two silos—the Minister of Finance and the Minister Colleges and Universities—not having a sense of what this entails because the information is with the Minister of Finance. It's pitiful, in my view. It really is. And I have to put it on record to reinforce what I said: "The ministry has not yet obtained current information" from the Ministry of Finance "on the level of activity in each trade or trade sector."

You would think that the Minister of Finance would send that information to Minister Milloy. I'm sure he wants it. And if Minister Milloy wants it, I say to myself, why isn't he asking? Why isn't it coming? You'd think it would be automatic, but nothing appears to be automatic. I've been doing this for a couple of years, and nobody seems to be doing anything in this regard. It's getting exhausting. It tires you out.

Mr. Mike Colle: It's very complicated.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: It appears to be complicated, but I don't believe it is. I don't think it is.

Interjections: It's a failure to communicate.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: We've got a failure here to communicate. This is indeed true.

I hope I have covered enough background to tell you that the record of this government is bad, poor—not stellar. They shouldn't use any of those words, based on what I said and what the Auditor General said. If you do so, you'll look bad, in my eyes at least, and in the eyes of all the citizens watching. It's in Hansard, so they will know. Whatever you say, versus what I said and what the auditor said, is on the record, so you've got to be a bit careful.

I want to refer a bit to the lack of what governments are doing and what the private sector is doing, because I promoted it through a motion in this Legislature. What Quebec has been doing in the whole area of training and apprentices has been a very positive development. Quebec has borrowed from Ireland—really France, to

begin with, although Ireland does more or less similar things. What Quebec has been doing for the last seven, eight, nine years is that they require of big employers, at least, and they did require it of small employers, that 1% of their payroll be devoted to training and apprenticeship programs.

I think it's an amazing thing, because what it says is, "We are all involved." The government plays a role and the corporations play a role, as indeed the unions play a role. These are the three bodies we ought to be strongly involving, which is what Ireland does, which is what France does, which is what Germany does. If we did that, we would have a stronger apprenticeship program.

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The Liberals don't know much about this so they can't say anything about it. I understand that. But this is what these other countries are doing. This is what Quebec is doing, and they're just around the corner from us. You could go by train; you don't have to—you could even call. You don't have to go far; you don't have to fly. You can go by train. You don't even have to go by car. You could speak to Monsieur Marc Lalonde, mon ami, because he's very close. They're close with Quebec.

So if Quebec can do this and employers are obliged to put some money into training—what a beautiful thing it was. When I introduced my motion, the Tories opposed it, which I understand, but so did the Liberals. Not one Liberal stood up to support my motion—not one; not even you, Mike. If you're an employer and you earn over \$1 million in terms of your earnings, 1% would be devoted to training. I thought to myself: "How could any left-leaning Liberal oppose that?" Time and time again, every left-leaning Liberal in this place—if they can be called such—opposed anything progressive such as what I proposed.

Mr. Mike Colle: It's better to make it a tax credit rather than a charge.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: No, no. What my motion says is, rather than a tax credit, they have an obligation to train their workers too. That's the point of it. The point isn't just for government to give away money to call centres so the employer can get money and take off in a couple of years and have no skills left to make it portable, so you move from one to the other.

Mr. Paul Miller: They can answer a phone.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: They can answer a phone, but it's not a portable skill—not a trade. It's not a trade. So I say to the Liberals: This isn't about giving them a tax credit, although there's a role for tax credits if you do it well. It's about the employer taking responsibility as well, saying, "We have a job to do as well," and not just leave it to the government to do it. Because every time there's a problem, they go to the government and say, "You should do this, you should do that." And every time they're broke, and the bankers and the insurance companies, whatever it is—the government should bail them out. Let's rent a banker; that's what we should do. Rent a banker these days. The corporations, when they're in trouble, run to the government, genuflecting, saying,

"We need you," and as soon as we give them the money and they're standing up again, they say, "We don't need you anymore." That's what the corporate sector does when they're healthy, and when they're not healthy they beg and they come to the taxpayers through governments to say, "Give me some more." So there's a role for the business sector.

Let me tell you what the Canadian Federation of Independent Business says, because I find it useful.

Is the Azorean event over? Is it over?

Interjections.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Very good. I had to speak to this issue. What could I do, Madam Speaker?

Here's what they say. They've done some consulting with their own members and they say, "What are the main challenges faced by your business in providing apprenticeship training?" This is business. The first one is, "Investment in training apprentices might be lost to other firms." You understand that business is saying that for 57% of them, the biggest obstacle is that, "If I train them, they'll be poached by somebody else"—57%. That's sometimes a lot.

Interjection.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Of course, but that's why they should all be training.

Interjections.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: No, no, it's okay, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Could I ask the member to take his seat. If you could speak through the Speaker, I would appreciate it. Thank you, member for Trinity-Spadina.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I was. I was looking at you in all my hour speech. All I do is look at you, except when I turn my head away.

So 57% say that their investment in training apprentices might be lost to other firms. So you've got to deal with the issue of poaching. What has this government done about this? Zero. In any word you can think of in different languages, it's zero.

But I say this in relation to the Tories, who often speak about one of the other elements in this particular survey, and I'll get to it. "Releasing apprentices for in-class training disrupts business." It's a reasonable point. If you release them for training, it disrupts business. I understand that. I still believe that it's good for them in the long haul to train their own employees. If they can't do it themselves, they should be sent somewhere else. Yes, it's disruptive, but 34% say that that is one of the obstacles.

The other is, costs to supervise and train apprentices are too burdensome. I understand that, but if you don't have the trained people, you're going to pay down the line. If it's too burdensome today, you can't get your tradesperson tomorrow. You wait and see how burdensome the costs will be down the line. Twenty-seven per cent said that.

Twenty-four per cent say what the Tories always say—the Tories only have one issue, which is this one: Rules on journeyman-apprentices ratios are too restrictive. If you listen to the Tories, the problem with

apprenticeship programs is that the ratio is just too high, and if we'd solve that, we'd solve all the issues around apprenticeships. I say this critically of the Tories, because they're like a one-trick pony on some issues, and they're a one-trick pony on this one. They say that there should be one journeyman to one apprentice. The point is that in some cases, in some trades, it is 1 to 1; in some cases, it's 2 to 1; in some, 3 to 1. These are the rules. In some cases, you need three to one to be able to supervise the different kinds of work that the tradesperson does, I argue, and I defend it. But to say that the ratio is the single biggest problem facing the trades, as to why we're not getting more trades, is utterly, utterly wrong and it's unfounded, and even the survey by business people tells you that that is wrong. I tell you that that's fourth on their list—and I even disagree with that. Even though it's number four, I disagree that that is the problem. That is not the problem, in my view. There are other solutions to the apprenticeship program.

Let me go to page 12 of their survey. What do they say here? Seventy-six per cent of them say, in relation to another survey question, "What key strategies should the Ontario government adopt to address the shortage of qualified tradespersons?"—the biggest one: Increase efforts to promote trades among youth. This is where I pointed out to the government members, including the parliamentary assistant today, that they have failed us in this regard. I have to tell you, in my view, the employers have failed us too, because I haven't seen big employers, medium-sized employers, doing ads in the papers on a regular basis in the last 10, 15 years saying, "We want you. The trades are amazing. They're well paid. Don't worry, you're going to be very happy in the trades, more so than some other professions. Join the ranks. It's good for you." I haven't seen too much of that. When was the last time you saw government ads promoting the trades? I haven't seen it.

The second one, in terms of what strategies the Ontario government should adopt to address the shortage of qualified tradespersons: Encourage apprentices to stay at the same firm upon training. Fifty-seven per cent said that. So the question to employers is, what are you doing about that to make sure that you keep your workers in your workplace? Are you promoting your work staff? Are you giving them the appropriate direction? Are you giving them the appropriate incentives? Are they well-paid enough to stay? Are you, as an employer, doing that? If you're not doing that, you're failing them as well; not just the government.

The third issue they say to address is the shortage of qualified tradespersons: Address barriers that make apprenticeship training costly. And it is costly. Fifty-three per cent say that's the problem. I say, as I've said earlier, that it will be more costly if you don't invest today, yes, you as a government, and yes, you as an employer.

The fourth is, create efficient ways to match apprentices and employers. That's another issue they bring to the floor that I agree with.

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We look at what employers are saying, we look at what the Auditor General said, we look at what I said vis-à-vis what the government does, including, by the way, what they're not doing in the high school system, and that is, we've got co-op programs in our high school system, which I support, but unless you as a student find an employer, you're not going to be able to get into a co-op program. The burden is on the student to find a co-op program; it's not on the school system or the government. If we put a little more emphasis and responsibility on the guidance counsellors to help to direct a student to an employer, wouldn't that be better? What happens now is, if my uncle is a plumber, the only option I've got is to go to my uncle to be able to get a co-op program. It's limited to the people that the student knows in terms of what co-op program you get into.

Wouldn't it be lovely to be able to expand the options for students and tell them there's a world of opportunities that they can get into? But we don't do that. Guidance counsellors don't do that. We don't have enough counsellors to do that. The government doesn't think about how the high school system could be more helpful. And as a result you've got kids going to programs who may or may not like what they're doing, but that's the extent and the limit of what they can do, because it's based on who they know versus getting the high school to open up the field and allow students to get the richest experiences from a multitude of employers that could be possible to match the interest and the skills of that particular student.

So today, as we speak about the college of trades, do I hope that the college of trades will be able to do something that the government has not been able to do? I hope so; I really do. The government has created an incredible number of bodies. There is the appointments council, comprised of eight members and a chair, appointed by the Lieutenant Governor in Council. It's in place to make appointments of all the members of the various elements of the college's governing structure, which include the board of governors, divisional boards and trade boards. It's responsible for appointing individuals who can be neutral and impartial to a roster of adjudicators. There's a whole lot of levels that we have created with this bill: the college board of governors, the divisional boards—which will be set up from the construction, motive power, industrial and service sectors. Advising the divisional board for each sector is a trade board made up of two employee reps and two employer reps from the sector, appointed by the appointments council. I don't want to read it all, but there are so many different committees that are set up and boards that are set up, all I can hope is that they're going to be useful, that they will be effective, that they will co-operate and that they will be able to do the job that we expect them to do, that the government has not done today.

I know that CUPE, in their submission on a proposed college of trades, doesn't support a college of trades. I know that they would prefer a system such as the one in Germany, the vocational education training, which

involves government heavily, which involves the trade union sector heavily and which involves employers heavily. That's the tripartite group of people that get together to solve all the questions of apprenticeship. I am a big supporter of the German system. I believe it works well. I don't know whether that is something that the government would ever consider. The problem is that the government has said the college of trades is the body that will solve our apprenticeship programs, and because of that, this is all that we can deal with. We are not open for other options. I would have been happy with other options, such as the one that CUPE proposes, not only the one from Ireland but of Germany as well. I would have been happy if the government had proposed even the Quebec proposal, which goes a little further than what this government is doing, but we have to deal with what the government gives us. We want to make it work.

As a result of what we have before us, we are going to be calling for hearings because we want to hear from all of the trades, including the additional ones the government has pulled together, the ones I probably don't agree with. They're 153 all together. We want to hear from as many people as possible. We want this board to work and we want to be able to get the best possible advice. So I look forward to the hearings, because I believe that if we haven't had all the advice that Whitaker has put together, we will be able to get it in the coming months and, as such, make it as effective as we possibly can.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Reza Moridi: At the outset, I wish to thank the members from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek and Trinity–Spadina. I thank the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek for his appreciation of the need for this college. He said that he's in favour of the establishment of this college of trades.

The member from Trinity–Spadina mentioned a number of points. In one instance he said, "The government is manufacturing the numbers." This is absolutely baseless. We are not manufacturing numbers. The reality is, the facts are there to speak for themselves.

I'll just bring the attention of the House to these facts. There are now 700,000 journeypersons working in our industries and serving our economy, and 120,000 active apprentices are working in our province. We have actually doubled the number of apprentices since we first came into office in 2003; we have doubled, from 60,000 to 120,000. There are 66 training provider services in this province; 24 of them are community colleges and the remaining 44 are unions and others.

In terms of funding, in contrast to what the honourable member from Trinity–Spadina mentioned, this government pays lots of attention to education, to skills development, to training and so forth. The numbers speak for themselves. Our \$6.4-billion investment in the Reaching Higher plan is the highest investment in our post-secondary education in the past 40 years. At every university campus, every college campus you go to today, you see careers in operation. Our \$2-billion skills-to-jobs

action plan speaks for itself. This is for training. This is for apprentice people.

There are lots of numbers. I can go on and on; for example, \$1.2 million to our labour market agreement. The Ontario summer jobs program: \$90 million. Our Ontario youth apprenticeship program, which is a \$190-million investment—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Thank you. The member from York-Simcoe.

Mrs. Julia Munro: I'm pleased to comment on the comments we've heard from the member from Trinity-Spadina. But I just wanted to ask rhetorically, in terms of my concerns with regard to the college of trades—because when I think back on the kinds of things that the government has done in the past few years, they have taken steps which have not served the issue of increasing the number of people involved in the trades. Particularly I'm concerned about things like the apprenticeship ratios, where now, looking at the possibility of greater mobility in the country, you have people who could find those apprenticeship opportunities outside the province and then come back to the province or emigrate to the province, so to speak. So the question of apprenticeship ratios seems to me to be a huge stumbling block that needs to be addressed by the government.

Of course at the same time, this is the government, through Bill 144, that took away the right to a secret ballot in reinstating card certification. So there are some structural issues that I believe the government has, in its responsibility, neglected to be able to ensure that we do in fact have a vigorous, energetic and innovative trade sector within the province, with which, by the way, I'm entirely in agreement.

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The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Pat Hoy: I'm pleased to rise and make some comment on Bill 183, the Ontario College of Trades and Apprenticeship Act. We're talking about a college of trades, and I'd like to just reverse that, trades in our college, just for a moment.

Members would know that in Windsor there is the St. Clair College—a rather large campus, actually—but few may know that there is a satellite campus in Chatham. Just on Friday, the federal member and myself announced some funding for that particular part of St. Clair College, the Chatham campus, some \$4.4 million shared equally; \$2.2 million between each level of government, federal and provincial. The focus was on a new technology and trade addition. So clearly both levels of government, federal and provincial, recognize the need for technology and trade.

This addition to St. Clair College will be some 18,000 square feet: a new facility, brand new. It is what they call flexible training, which will allow for technology and trades to be provided to their students on an ongoing basis with flexibility to ensure that they learn. Then after that, some of these folks naturally will want to seek jobs, and no doubt come under this new Bill 183, should it be

passed, the Ontario College of Trades and Apprenticeship Act, which will provide for all of those students.

All of us here in this Legislature who speak particularly to high school students talk about various kinds of jobs. I'm sure that we all talk about the skilled trades. There's a great demand for it in Chatham-Kent-Essex and, I'm certain, throughout the southwest and other areas of Ontario. So I was pleased to put those comments forward on how we're working hard to promote that, certainly in Chatham-Kent-Essex.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments? The member for Trinity-Spadina has up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: To the member from—oh.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Sorry. The member for Brant.

Mr. Dave Levac: The reason I wanted to talk about this is that the member for Trinity-Spadina brought up some challenging comments about the elementary school, and hence, going on to secondary school, leading up to the need for the colleges. I want to comment quickly on it.

It's a patchwork right now, and that's the problem. I want to share with the member that it's not disappearing. It's not kind of, "Going, it's going, it's gone." That's not what's happening. We tried to reverse the trend because the funding was removed previously, and the capacity for those elementary schools to provide that hands-on activity for, as it was called in the old days, home ec, tech, industrial arts and family studies—the students were not exposed to it for quite a few years. Then, when the amalgamations of the boards took place, some of the boards that had the programs had to mix with some that didn't have the programs, and then they had some discussions and debates on whether or not they would extend it back into the boards that actually had to leave that provision.

So it's a patchwork at this time. Quite frankly, I like what the member is talking about in terms of exposure of the kids at an earlier age to that. There is some encouragement going on at the Ministry of Education level to actually continue to move down that road. I think we're going to see a turning around of the Queen Mary a little bit. Hopefully we'll get to have our students exposed to both home ec and tech, at the same time for all of our students. That would address some of the concerns he's talking about.

The second part of some of his discussion was based on whether or not this is a holistic approach, and whether or not the college will maintain or have the capacity to deliver on some of the issues that concerns are being raised about. With the Ontario College of Teachers, for example, he talked about the raise. I'm still a voluntary member and offer my dues. They went up about \$30 over the first installation. I think they originally started at \$90 and then moved up to \$100. Now they're up to about \$125 or \$130.

I think we're going to see the same kind of response, in that there are going to be some good things happening.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Thank you, and now the member for Trinity–Spadina has up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: To the member for Brant, I just want to tell him that it isn't just patchwork, it's the disappearance of, and it isn't just me saying it; it's People For Ed saying it in their own studies. That is the reality that is being studied by groups like People for Ed, and I deplore it, as you do, and I think it's a shame.

To the member from Richmond Hill about my comment about their manufacturing and/or inflating certain numbers that are not as real as they claim, I get this information from the background that we were given: employment and training division, background material for hearings, the Auditor General's 2008 annual report, S.3.08. Those of you who are interested in getting hold of this report, call me if you want. That might be the easiest way to get it, unless you can do this on your own, and then you can determine for yourself what is real and/or manufactured. This way, you don't have to take my word or the word of the member from Richmond Hill. Then you'll be able to have the facts.

The point is this: The government has failed us on programs connected to apprenticeships. We desperately need good programs, now and in the future, and they've failed us. I am hoping that the college of trades—which has the following duties: review of compulsory trade applications, review of apprenticeship ratios, enforcement of apprenticeship standards and discipline—will be able to do a better job than the government has been able to do so far, and the hearings should help to tell us whether they're on the right track or whether there's more to be done.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Further debate?

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you, Madam Speaker, for giving me the opportunity to speak on this legislation.

After quite an exciting one hour, I will try to do my best to reflect on this very important piece of legislation and offer some thoughts on Bill 183.

There are a few things that I do want to talk about in the course of my time, address the issues which my friend from Trinity–Spadina raised, but of course I'm not going to go into all the issues they raised, perhaps for the simple reason that I may not have as in-depth knowledge as he does. But I do want to bring a perspective on this legislation from the point of view of what is going on today in our economy.

Every single day, we see massive changes coming about—news just today with the creation of a new GM and that kind of intervention, the kind of engagement governments are being involved in now to make sure that the restructuring that is taking place is sustainable and creates jobs in the long term. We are going through a significant economic reorder—perhaps is what we can say. It is creating a new order as to how we do business, and it's going to have an impact not just today, but for at least a generation to come.

So when we are debating laws, when we are looking at things in this Legislature, I believe strongly that we need

to look from that perspective—we need to have our lenses on—not as to what was happening yesterday, but what's going to happen tomorrow. That very much is our role as legislators, to be forecasting for the future years to come and not get too tainted by what has happened in the past, because things have changed dramatically between yesterday and today, and they continue to change; they continue to evolve every single day. I really want to emphasize to all the members in this Legislature that when we're looking at this legislation or other bills, we keep that in mind as things are progressing.

One of the things we are seeing in today's economic order, and it seems to be a consensus around the world in terms of developed countries, developing economies and transition-economy countries, is that one of the things we need to restart this economy is through stimulus packages to invest in our infrastructure, and that's something we are seeing all across the board, both at national and sub-national levels of government. In fact, even at municipal levels of government we are watching that. Of course, the focus is on construction jobs, to make sure that bricks and mortar are being put in place, roads are being improved, bridges are being built, university buildings are being built. All that has a very important impact on skilled trades, the kind of thing we're talking about. All of a sudden we're putting a lot of dollars, a lot of real money in place to create jobs which will be significant in the area of trades.

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That's the underlying theme, the factor, in Bill 183: as we are bringing more people into trades, what kind of regulatory system we're creating to make sure that we maintain the safety of the workers, that we make sure there's a diversity of those workers, that we make sure that we bring in more young people to skilled trades, that we make sure that continuing work is being done to modernize skilled trades. All these things are extremely important and that is why the creation of a college, as proposed under Bill 183, is significant, because it will allow for the professionalization of skilled trades.

Why is it—and this is a point to ponder—that in our economy, in our society, the only professional regulatory bodies that exist are lawyers, doctors, engineers and chartered accountants? What is it about those professions that require a professional body or a self-regulatory body? What is special about that, because these people—and I belong to the Law Society of Upper Canada, so can I say that, because I had certain years of a university degree, somehow I have an extra feather in my cap and thus I should belong to a particular professional body? Why not skilled trades? Why not make sure that they have the same profile, that they have the same mechanisms of regulation present to say that this is a profession worthy of being part of, this is a profession where people should be joining in and making sure—because there are prescribed rules, there are mechanisms, there is self-governance around this particular profession.

I think for us to do that through this piece of legislation—by creating a college of trades, we are moving in

that direction and saying to our young people who may be considering their next career opportunities that being a tradesperson, getting the skills for a particular trade, is a good thing, is a noble thing to do in our society, and they have, as a professional, the same rights and privileges as any other profession may have. I think that's something we need to really consider.

About two weekends ago I had breakfast with two of my constituents, Bob Peters and Mary Peters. Bob and Mary own an auto garage, Bob Peter's Garage. Both of them are immigrants to Canada. Bob came in the late 1950s, I believe, he was telling me, and Mary came about 20 years ago to Canada. They worked very, very hard in building a very successful life. They've been living in Ottawa for some time. Their garage is located on Scott Street in my riding. We were having a conversation over breakfast at Donna's and we were talking about exactly this issue. Bob was talking about how not too many young people are interested in skilled trades and what we as a government need to do. He was talking about the kind of things we need to promote trades more in schools. We need to raise the profile of trades and make young people in particular take pride in becoming an auto mechanic, for instance, as Bob and his son are. They're running a successful business in Ottawa Centre.

To that conversation—I think this college is trying to do the same thing. One of the college's mandates is to promote the professions, to provide that sense of dignity, that this is good work. Even though you're working with your hands, that's good work. These are good-paying jobs; young people should consider becoming tradespeople. There is proper regulation to do that. That's a very important aspect of this legislation that we need to remember and keep in mind.

One of the great examples in Ottawa is the trades building that is being built at Algonquin College. Seventy million dollars has been invested—\$35 million from the provincial government and another \$35 million from the federal government—exactly for the reason that there is a demand in the economy and we need to provide the necessary training to make sure these tradespeople have the skill sets. The college will help in making sure it provides for that standard regulatory function, in terms of giving licences, certificates and apprenticeships, which are important for the viability of the profession.

Here's the point where I differ with the member from Trinity-Spadina—he was talking about call centre jobs, which kind of hit me. That's close to my heart, coming from Ottawa, because we had a lot of call centre jobs created at Dell. Those are real jobs that real people were involved in. These are jobs where the apprentice requires approximately 4,000 hours to do both in-school and on-the-job training, similar to, for example, automotive glass technicians, hoisting engineers, mobile and tower crane operators, roofers, chefs, construction craft workers, heavy equipment operators and automotive accessory technicians.

I don't think we should be saying, "This is a noteworthy trade, and that is not a noteworthy trade." Be-

cause somebody has chosen to be involved in the call centre trade, they deserve the same respect. That is a trade, and they should have all the resources available. We should not dismiss them: "Oh, it's simply a matter of picking up the phone and saying, 'Hi. Can I help you?'" If that is all it is, then we should feel comfortable letting those jobs go to India or some other part of the world. Of course not. We want those jobs to be maintained here, and we want to make sure Ontarians are properly trained for those jobs. Otherwise, we fall into the same trap as before, that somehow lawyers are better than auto mechanics.

Of course not. These are equal jobs, and they should have proper regulations and make sure these people are working in safe conditions and have available all the resources to do the job they're trained to do. That's why I'm supportive of this legislation. It creates a college, like other regulatory bodies, providing the necessary licensing and regulatory authorities, providing the tools to promote skilled trades among our young people, which is extremely important.

On that note, I urge members to support this legislation; I think it's a move in the right direction. Of course, we can always do more—we can criticize every single bill; that's our job. But I think we should also look at the important elements it will achieve. For me, the sort of quality of professions is a very important point, and that's why I'm very supportive of this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

I just want to note here that apparently the clock has broken, so we're going to manually time the two minutes, the clerks have graciously offered. We will give you a 10-second warning, and then time.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I was actually just going to ask for unanimous consent for the member from Ottawa Centre to continue right up till 6 o'clock, but I suspect he's not willing to do that.

That said, it's a pleasure to join the debate. Of course, the member who has just spoken is a great friend of mine. Although he's from a different party, we sit on the same side of the House and live in the same city. He knows full well about the needs we have in Ottawa with our trade school at Algonquin College. Of course, I know he is a big supporter, as I am, of what Bob Gillett and the folks at Algonquin College in Nepean are doing to ensure that we have young men and young women right across Ontario trained to work in the trades.

The challenge, of course, as my party will point out from time to time, is that apprenticeship ratios in this province are not acceptable. We need to lower those apprenticeship ratios.

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Also, I just would like to point out that one of the concerns we have on this side of the House is the closeness that the McGuinty Liberal have with the Working Families Coalition and how that coalition may, from time to time, persuade the government toward policies that they deem acceptable, but not perhaps those who are

actually working as tradespeople across the province. That said, we have—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Five-second warning.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Okay, thank you very much, Madam Chair. I look forward to continuing in debate.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: The member from Ottawa Centre made a few comments about the call centres. I don't think you would have anybody say that they don't value the work that call centre individuals do.

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: It's called annoying.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Well, that's a different problem. They may call you and you find it annoying, but that's a different problem. The fact that they do that work is a good thing. It's not a negative thing. What Marchese was talking about is something very different. Should they qualify—the call centres—for the kinds of dollars that the government gave out in the millions? Consider what they were trained for as a trade, because that's what the member from Ottawa Centre was saying, that this is a trade. Maybe the member from Ottawa Centre can explain to me what aspect of a call centre is a trade, and secondly, what the training consisted of that allows it to be called a trade? What of that training was the skill that was portable to another trade? What did they learn in that call centre training that was valuable that they couldn't get in any other form? Because it required the 4,000 hours of apprenticeship. I really am puzzled by the extent to which the member from Ottawa Centre—and I know he's from there because that's where the call centre was, and it's the same city the Premier is from. I know they need to defend it, but I am telling you I was heavily critical at the time, am still critical today and still argue there was nothing in it that should be called a trade.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Reza Moridi: This bill which is before the House is about modernizing the apprenticeship business in this province, but before making more comments on that point, I want to just say that I'm so glad to hear that the honourable member for Trinity-Spadina modified his expression about the workers in call centres. For us on this side of the House and for the Liberal Party, the people who work in call centres are professionals and the job they do—I can't do their job. They are professionals in their job, we have great respect for them, and they are making enormous contributions to our economy and to our province.

I'm just going to quote from Patrick Dillon, who is the business manager and secretary-treasurer for the Provincial Building and Construction Trades Council. He says, "Today's announcement marks the start of a new era for the skilled trades in Ontario. The college of trades will allow industry experts greater input over all aspects of skills training in this province. This is something that

the construction industry has been seeking for a long time."

I want to quote the Ontario Home Builders' Association, which said, "We think the apprenticeship system can better reflect the reality of our industry and recognize the opportunities we [the industry] create. If the college can support our work in attracting students to our industry, or assist a mature worker making a career change, then the college will have a positive impact on our industry, and help us deal with our skilled ... shortages." These are quotes from two sides of the work; one is industry and the other one is labour—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Thank you. The member from Oshawa.

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: I very much appreciate the opportunity to speak about this. I do have some concerns about this. First of all, it's the portability of a lot of jobs. We create the college of trades to address certain aspects of trades that are out there. I said on the public accounts committee, which discussed this—we had some insight that this was coming forward and what would be discussed, and one of the concerns is the ability to take the courses locally. I can recall that a friend of mine was a carpenter, and he had to drive to Peterborough in order to take courses. As well, some of the auto mechanics had to go to Toronto in order to take their courses, when we had Durham College locally. It was very inconvenient at that time. During peak seasons when construction was on, these individuals were not working and bringing in income; they were in courses. That was some of the difficulty: to make sure that those courses reflect the needs of those workers who are out there.

Not only that, but some of the courses have not matured enough. For example I can recall, having worked in the auto sector when first coming out of school, that they were specialized. When a person went into auto mechanics, they took—transmission experts, for example, did nothing on any other aspects of the vehicles, but worked solely on transmissions, and yet there is nothing to reflect that specific trade that's identified as being a whole and complete mechanic or a transmission repair mechanic, or that sort of aspect.

Some of the specifics are necessary, and we need to make sure that the focus is on those needs in the local community that are identified, because quite frankly, that was the main reason that colleges were established in the first place. When they were first established and brought in, they were to recognize and identify the local needs and bring that independent ability at a local level to ensure that the service they were providing was eventually going to serve the communities that are out there. I certainly hope that this will reflect that in ensuring that the local needs, and the ability to supply flexibility on times as well as locations, are met.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member from Ottawa Centre has up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: It seems like the clock is working; otherwise, I'm sure we can call a skilled tradesperson to come and fix it who will benefit from this legislation.

I want to thank the member from Nepean–Carleton—she is a good friend—and the member from Trinity–Spadina, the member from Richmond Hill and the member from Oshawa for their comments.

Just a note to the member from Trinity–Spadina: I don't want to get into a debate about which skilled trade is worthy and which is not, and look into all those different factors he was talking about, because I don't think we should be in that business. I don't think we should be differentiating, because different people have different skill sets and they're appropriate for different types of trades, and we should not be making a general, broad statement that somehow one person who's doing a call centre job would not have any other skills because maybe that's what their skills are that they can rely on. I think that's a very, very important point.

The other point I wanted to raise is that the government is not just passing this legislation and saying, "That's it. This is what we'll do for the trades." In the 2009 budget, there's about \$700 million that has been allocated and passed by this legislation, which the members opposite did not vote for, for skills training, literacy training, apprenticeship programs etc. These are important investments. I mentioned Algonquin College and the kind of work that's going on in my riding at Carleton University. We just announced \$52.5 million for a new building where skilled tradespeople will be working. These investments are important. We are in a new economy. We need to make sure that our tradespeople are well qualified, well represented and that they have a means to regulate themselves so that we can continue to grow this economy.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Further debate?

Mr. John O'Toole: It's a pleasure to have a few moments to speak on Bill 183, An Act to revise and modernize the law related to apprenticeship training and trades qualifications and to establish the Ontario College of Trades. I think that's the really important thing to realize: What's the intent of the bill?

I want to start by making it perfectly clear that on this side of the House we have the highest regard for skills and trades, and skilled trades specifically. That being said, we could easily say—I think we'd find unanimity here—that these are the people, the tradespeople, who came to this country or this province, or our communities, and indeed built those communities. The infrastructure that we're all talking about all the time has been built by people often new to Canada who brought with them skill sets. Now we're renewing a lot of that infrastructure, but the very buildings we're in and the tradesmen and craftsmen who built this place, whether stone-masons or whatever, and the carvings done here—these are all crafts and trades and skills. We have the highest regard and resolve to make sure that these improvements strengthen and modernize these respected trades and the persons who perform them, from wherever they come from, as long as they bring them to Canada and to Ontario. It's very clear.

1700

As most members have said, in my riding of Durham, I'm very pleased, along with my colleague Mr. Ouellette, to work with Durham College and Don Lovisa, the board and the students there, and to celebrate with them the fact that at colleges, quite often they come away with skills and skill sets, many of them referred to as trades. That could include everything from a journalist to someone working in television arts, or someone working in media or in technology, animation etc. These are the emerging trades that I see. There's perhaps some lack of vision: We're looking backwards at envisioning the trades as opposed to looking forward and modernizing them, as the name of the bill implies.

I want to say that there's an important reference point that has been mentioned by a few of the speakers: What we're saying, as if we were speaking directly to our young students here today who are working as pages, is that the future and the skills of the future are going to be completely different than the skills of the past. They will build on the foundation of those skills, but, for instance, let's take a tool and die maker of many years ago. Today you'd have to be very comfortable with computers and numeric control devices and PLCs, programmable logic controllers. So the evolution of the trades themselves and the skill sets that are required—it's absolutely critical to be consulting with young people, the young people in our schools today, the young professors and teachers in our schools today, who are more attuned to the technology that they will end up working in.

I believe that a lot of that advanced manufacturing is indeed being taught at Durham College and the University of Ontario Institute of Technology. I want to mention, out of respect, not just the leadership there, Don Lovisa as well as Ronald Bordessa, the president—their job is to reach out and modernize their facilities. I'm very pleased to say that Mr. Ouellette and I were at the college and the university recently; indeed, we were there celebrating at a community event on Friday, and they were all so pleased with the recent announcements of a huge amount of money from the federal government, and there was some money by the provincial government as well. What is it focusing on? What they were focusing on was preparing the facilities to have the infrastructure, the equipment as well as devices, to train young tradespersons, or tradespersons of any age, really—second career opportunities being one of the things the government is talking about—and they are modernizing it to deal with energy.

Everyone in this House would agree and also understand that Durham region is the energy capital of Canada. That is a pretty broad statement, but we are about a third of the population of Canada, about 13 million-plus, and we generate 30%, 40% of the energy for Ontario, certainly the baseload with the nuclear plants for Ontario and the skilled people who work in that, and the new renewable energies, whether it's ground source, geothermal, solar, wind power—you name it; those courses and those trades, those new skills and development are

being taught at the university. It's the first nuclear engineering program in Canada. We're also going to have the most modern and advanced renewable energy platform, I believe, at the Durham College campus in Whitby.

I'm trying to link this bill and what it's actually doing to where the future is moving. The last reference point I really want to make, and I think it's important—not in a partisan way—is to look at the vision of the future that has been outlined in several recent textbook-type novels. One of them that is the most impressive to me is Friedman's book *The World is Flat*. Now, the very first chapter of his book outlines a glimpse of the future, and this is directed primarily at young people. What Friedman says in his book is, "What are the jobs of the future?"

In manufacturing, 400,000 jobs have been eliminated in the last two or three years, and I'm not sure they're going to come back. These are good-paying, skilled jobs in the assembly plants. I myself worked in those plants for 30 years. It provokes the question, "What are the jobs of the future?" The government has committed, I think, \$3 billion to the Second Career program. Much of it is federal money, which I fully agree with. I'm not sure if they have a clear vision.

If I go back to Friedman's book, what it says in the first chapter is, "What will be done here is what's actually done here." When you look at trades like radiology and the digital world, that's a skill. It's a profession. They're all kind of interrelated. Engineers are skilled, but some tradespeople are just as skilled in the actual development and working with tools. But here's the point. Some trades—architecture is a good example, where there are architectural technologists and architects—highly skilled, university educated, graduate school, maybe 12 years to become fully certified in the trade: Much of that stuff can be done in India. They put the concepts and the building code for the requirements of the lead project that they're going build, and they send it to India. They have engineers. They have universities and colleges there—highly skilled, developed, integrated. They do all these drawings and technical stuff and send it back to us by satellite. The book is about globalization. There's nothing in this report that addresses how we move forward in a modern, competitive, efficient manner—nothing in here at all. Actually, it's looking backwards. Most of it is looking at how we can manage the electricians and the plumbers—history.

The best remarks I've heard in the discussion today were by the member from the NDP who spoke earlier today, Mr. Miller from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek, a tradesman himself. I wrote his remark down. He said that when he was working at, I believe, Stelco or one of the steel companies, and he was a tradesperson, they had a program called multi-skilling or multi-craft. He posed the question to the minister who was here at the time was here. In multi-crafting, what he was saying is he had the basic skills and infrastructure of knowledge to become a proficient tool and die maker or whatever his trade was,

and by learning another skill set, he could become a welder.

Now, that's progressive. Progressivity is what I think is important. That means in certain working environments, like a steel plant, Mr. Miller was able to know the electrical codes and know the lockout procedures and other procedures of his craft, but at the same time he could over time, maybe another year or two of study and work and practice with the tools, become a welder and he'd be multi-skilled. That's the future.

For instance, if he was a tool and die maker trained without computers and the PLCs, he could take an additional course and become a tool and die maker and tool repairer, which would allow him or her to actually shut the machine down, lock it out, diagnose the problems through the computer, as well as fix the machine that did the press or the mould or the injection or whatever it did. That's progressivity. That's modernization. None of it's in here. They're looking backwards at trying to tell one trade working on their own what to do. That's not how it works anymore. They work as teams of professionals, really.

Now, there's a glimmer in this particular Bill 183 that I do support, and Mr. Miller said that as well. I presented this argument earlier and some people scoffed at it, but I'm presenting it this way. I'm suspicious that they're actually hiding the real potential outcome by calling it—I'm going to slow down a bit, Madam Speaker. To get these complex topics across you need to have more time—an hour, if I could get the indulgence, but here it is. The issue here is, quite honestly, when you're looking at skilled tradespeople and their mobility in the economy and at what this bill is doing, you're concerned.

1710

They've got the college. It's a good idea conceptually. A profession is defined, in any theoretical model, as a self-regulating body. Doctors are a profession. What does that mean? They're self-regulating. What does that mean? They're self-disciplining. Doctors don't go to court if they have a problem on the operating table or a needle makes your arm swell up or something. They're immune to the law. They're disciplined internally and professionally, the same as all professions. By definition, a profession is a self-regulating organization. That's the business 101 course.

Now, in that course I learned that nurses, dentists, doctors, accountants—I'm going to just give you a little example here; I'm going to diverge a bit. The governance of the college is fundamental to this whole bill: "Part XI establishes the appointments council which will be responsible for appointing the members of the board and other key bodies in the college's governance structure." I'm almost heartbroken. The idea is good to have an objective, qualified, independent special body, called a college, which determines whether or not disciplinary action is necessary. The problem is that there's an inherent conflict.

This is what they did to the college of teachers. You had these independent people. Stay-at-home moms, stay-

at-home pops, accountants, dentists—whoever—sat on the college of teachers. They reviewed intelligently, objectively and dispassionately a breach of something in the college code. They delivered it, consulted with experts to find out what they should do to resolve the issue: maybe more retraining, maybe a bit of an apology or something for some error made.

Here's the real issue why I can't support it the way it is, unless I get some clarity on it. The function of a union is to protect its members from discipline. So you have a college that is looking at administering the decisions of the college—the code of conduct, etc.—and you have a union that has a conflict. Now, if the college and the union are the same thing, let's call it what it is. I think there should be no political appointments to these colleges; I think they should be picked. Here's the issue: If it's unionized or non-unionized, management, small business, big business, owners, shareholders and everything else should be represented on these boards and make decisions. But if I see this thing taken over by and run by Pat Dillon and the friends of the Liberal Party, called the Family Coalition, I am disappointed, disenchanted and with no vision for the young people I am trying to address here today. It's purely politics, and that's why I'm saying I'm disappointed at this point in time. I still have an open mind and retain some hope that they might do the right thing. But experience proves to me that they won't. They simply won't.

I have raised a couple of points here. The member from Brant, who was a high school teacher and spoke earlier today, said he remembers the old days of home economics and tech shops. Well, I think we have to realize that the economy of education today and the kind of education people get involves a lot more choice in the curriculum.

I'm a parent of five children. My wife is now a retired teacher, and one of my daughters is a high school teacher. I have the greatest respect for teaching, but there's a predisposition that everybody has to go to university, and if you don't, or don't qualify, somehow you've missed the boat. We've got to somehow get around that concept.

People with skills today have value. Value isn't based on how much money you make or how fancy your car is; it's about your ability to contribute to your family, your community, your country, and we all have different roles. I think that if you look at this thing and it's to protect who can do what, what if—let's go back to Mr. Miller's example of the multi-skilled person, the multi-crafts person, who could actually fix a computer as well as the computer that's operating some tool. Do you understand? It's a machine that's going up and down or making, pressing things. There's not enough modernization in this thing, and it comes back to the governance model. That section 11 level of the bill is absolutely critical.

I want to mention one thing that will show me the reasons for a bit of disillusionment about this bill. I'm going to refer to one of the government's bills. It's a Ministry of Labour bill, Bill 175, and it's called the Ontario Labour Mobility Act. It's a very good idea,

actually. Interprovincially, if the jobs are in Alberta or Saskatchewan or Quebec or Newfoundland and Labrador, with gas and oil and all these things, then I think individuals should have some way—and there's the red seal program, which recognizes trades and trades standards between provinces. I agree with all of that, because individuals should have the right, in a free country, to move about within the economy.

Here's a little example worth reading from this morning's *Globe and Mail*. It says, "Labour Mobility at Heart of Accounting Battle." Here's what it is: It's protectionism. Bingo, simple as that. Here's the argument. The two programs are called LMC, labour mobility code, and AIT, the Agreement on Internal Trade. What it means is, an individual who is a certified general accountant—that's what this article is about—who is able to do an audit in Alberta is not able to do an audit in Ontario. They say that only CAs, chartered accountants, can do these audits. I think this is a good example of how government and certain organizations create red tape and barriers to mobility and individual autonomy, and I think that this college should address some of these dysfunctional things. I know for a fact that for the last 10 years, they've been arguing with Quebec about labour mobility, interprovincial trade and labour, and they create artificial barriers from time to time. But there's a bill that they're working on, and they're accused in the paper today of already breaking it.

I'll just keep the thing on-focus here. Bill 179 is the Regulated Health Professions Statute Law Amendment Act. There's a little section in this bill that's in non-compliance. In Ontario, for an optician—these are the people who make the glasses, who carve the lenses and that, for the particular persuasion of changing how things look. In Ontario, it's two years or four years: two years full-time at Sheridan or one of the colleges. In Alberta, they can do it in six months. Now we're going to allow the people from Alberta to come to Ontario, but the people from Alberta have six months' training. Students like you may spend two years of tuition and board and all the expenses—it would probably cost you \$100,000, really—loss of income and the skills costs of the application.

This bill doesn't come nearly close enough to address the future skills and skill sets and how they're delivered in this province. This is about payback to the family coalition group that supported—

Interjection: Working Families.

Mr. John O'Toole: —Working Families Coalition that paid off Dalton McGuinty's third party advertisement, and I think it's shameful, if that's really what has motivated this change. It does nothing except tax labour. Now they have to pay to belong to the college when they're working in the shop, or more—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Thank you. Questions and comments?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I appreciate the comments made by the member from Durham, and agree with some comments and disagree with some others.

One of the things I agree with is the point he and other Conservatives have made, and that is that we should be promoting and supporting the trades, but I don't think you can find any member in this Legislature who would say any differently. The problem for me is what our government is doing about it. Part of the criticism is that if we all believe in that and we agree, what has this government done?

1720

In my hour, I talked about how the government is failing us at the elementary level and the high school level. Timothy Eaton is shutting down. It's a state-of-the-art high school, a beautiful place for the trades. It's shutting down: not enough enrolment. At the elementary level, we've shut down family studies programs, home economics—the different terminology we use—that would give young men and women access to programs that involve mind and body activities. It's not just academic work—and they're disappearing.

Dave Levac talks about how it's a patchwork of programs, and I argue it's not just a patchwork; it's the gradual elimination of these programs, which I find very sad. So I wanted to agree with him in this regard and to also point something else out. The Canadian Federation of Independent Business says, "What are the biggest challenges for apprentices? One of them is no available information about apprenticeship training." It's difficult to find. We've got to do something about that. The second thing is, to get the tax credit takes anywhere from 12 months to 18 months. Why? I'm sure the member from Durham wants to comment on that as well.

Mr. Reza Moridi: I thank the member from Durham and also the member from Trinity-Spadina for their comments. It's a pleasure to continue discussion on Bill 183.

The member from Trinity-Spadina just indicated what this government has done, and says this government hasn't done much. I am just going to remind the member that when his party was in government, I believe he was the minister of universities and colleges. What they did was they cut the funding for post-secondary education, they cut the funding for student aid by nearly 50%, they increased tuition fees by 50% and they eliminated up-front grants. That is the record of the member's party when they were in government in relation to post-secondary education, in contrast to ours. We are investing \$6.2 billion in our universities and colleges, which is the biggest investment in our post-secondary education in over 40 years.

I do agree with the member from Durham, talking about the change in technology. Being a former business executive myself in the manufacturing industry, I witnessed, for example, the change in tool making and die making, from the people who used to work with hands, and then it became all computerized with largely programmable controls. This is what's happening, and they were trades and technologies and professions which didn't exist. For example, radiology, which was just mentioned: 107 years ago there was no such profession called

radiology, and now we have radiology, we have radiographers, we have MRIs—we have so many new technologies coming, and that's why this college of trades is needed; that's why we need to have a college of trades: to promote professions, to promote the knowledge and skills of our young people and to help our economy. That's all about this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: By the time that an individual gets to into a college level, most of the programming is done by then. What we need to do is get back to the days that the member from Brant mentioned, being in grade 7 and 8, when they had shops and everything else there to instill that desire to get involved, to participate in all of that.

But some of the questions that I have, I would hope they'd be able to address here. What's going to happen with college propaners, or those kids who aren't licensed apprentices who are out there working on summer jobs? What's going to happen with all those drive-through oil change places? They're not licensed mechanics; how are you going to be able to drive through and get your oil changed without a licensed mechanic or a certified individual? What's going to happen to these locations? What's going to happen to the region-of-Durham workers who provide plumbing services by doing drain cleanouts, although they're not licensed plumbers?

We don't have answers to these questions. I brought them up to the ministry when it came forward. I'm still waiting for the response. There is no response to these things. We need some clear-cut answers as to how these individuals are going to be able to adapt their current systems. Are there going to be exemptions for the road workers who work on the roads or the sewer and water workers in the municipalities? I don't know. They haven't got an answer for it yet. We need some of those clear, defined answers.

One of the concerns that I do have is, as it says on page 5 here, under part II, prohibitions: "No individual shall engage in the practice of a compulsory trade or hold himself or herself out as able to do so unless the individual holds a certificate of qualification in that trade."

On Sunday we had some problems with the low-flush toilet in the house and I fixed that. Am I now exempt from taking care of that legally? I'm guilty? What's the answer there? Some of the problems are that some of these things need to be addressed. And how is it going to unfold? Who's going to fix the hole in the wall when the kids let the wind blow it open and it tore a big hole in there? Do I have to get a plasterer or a taper in to do that work? I'm not sure. I don't think the intent is there to do those things, but I certainly hope there would be some exemptions or allowances for individuals to do their own things.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Dave Levac: The member from Oshawa brings up some legitimate questions but, quite frankly, I won't

squeal on him for doing unlicensed work in his house because I think he knows the answer to that question as to whether or not he would be in breach of the law. My instinct tells me that you're okay. You don't have to worry about it.

The member from Durham offers us some insight on a few issues that have been accepted by the NDP. I think that some of the points he made are very fair in terms of this House. I want to repeat them, and that is, there isn't anybody I've heard in this House, at any time since I've been here, say anything less than respectful of the trades, and by doing so, the communication that we're trying to establish and the consultation that we've established in the parliamentary assistant's meetings, the minister's meetings and the staff meetings is to continue to ensure that the dialogue continues while this is being debated. That's the first point that I would say that the member from Durham is on. The rest of the points that he made toward the end of his dissertation were somewhat disingenuous at best when he starts to talk about having people put money in pockets and all of that kind of stuff. My suggestion would—

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: On a point of order, Madam Speaker—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Yes, thank you, the member from Nepean—Carleton. I would ask the member to withdraw “disingenuous.” Thank you.

Mr. Dave Levac: Is it not a word to be used? I withdraw.

Somewhat unadvisedly, I would suggest to the member from Durham that the problem lies in the same old, same old hack politic that basically says, “Scratch them up, mark them up, make accusations, but let's not talk about whether or not we've engaged in a conversation with the trades,” which we have. So let's bring some clarity to it. The people who are having the discussions presently on this bill are going to continue to do so and try to bring us the best piece of legislation that we can design, and I thank the member—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member from Durham has up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. John O'Toole: Again, the member from Trinity—Spadina—all the people, I thank them for their comments—posed a question of whether or not the CFIB is happier or whatever. I think the main measurement there is, of all the numbers they've put out there on the number of people registered in trades or apprenticeship training, only 48% or less than 50% actually graduate. There's a bigger structural problem.

The member from Richmond Hill talked about his time—I worked 31 years at General Motors in computers and other things and management in the plant latterly. I am very familiar with the complexities of getting work done in an industrial setting, and I compliment him on talking about PLCs and the changing trade natures. It's an appropriate comment.

The member from Oshawa, I thought, brought most of the reality to it. How is this implemented? In fact, if you look at the very first section, part II of the bill, he's right.

It says it, “prohibits a person from engaging in the practice of a trade designated under the act, employing journeypersons in those trades or sponsoring or employing apprentices unless the person is a member of the college.” Now, this is mandatory preparation, and it's also a kind of monopolization. So he raises a very important point.

The member from Brant, I think, is fair in his comments. I tried to stay on the high side of the debate and pose questions about modernization for young people and the changing nature, as the member from Richmond Hill said. I think it's important that if this bill is going to actually do something about raising trades up to a new level and recognizing former training or prior learning experience, as has been done in other countries, let's try and accommodate new Canadians. Let's not build barriers. If they come here as an electrical engineer, they should be able to pass certain qualifications for languages and skills and be moved into the workplace. This looks to me like it's kind of an old boys' network thing, and I don't think it's appropriate for the modernization of labour mobility itself.

1730

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Further debate?

Mr. Paul Miller: I'd like to commend the member from Durham. Once again, he has enlightened us with a few ideas that I may agree with and some I don't. The member from Oshawa had a couple of good points himself.

Speaking from the history of trades, when I started in the early 1970s, we served a three-year apprenticeship to become what they call an ironworker. That went on for a few years. The company decided they wanted to improve the situation. Instead of having to wait for a welder to come to help the ironworker and a carpenter to build the scaffold, they decided, “Maybe we should train the ironworkers, through the Ministry of Colleges and Universities, to be welders.” They got us to take welding courses and we became certified welders under the CWB, the Canadian Welding Bureau.

A few years later, they decided that maybe we could use these gentlemen as industrial mechanics, so they sent us to school for hydraulics and they sent us to school for other millwrighting expertise. We got a few more job classes, and now we were called multi-crafters. In other words, we had two, three trades that we could go out on. The reason for that was that they could send a crew, like the member from Durham spoke about, of four people out, and the three others could help that person in their discipline. If you were building a scaffold, the welder and the rigger would help the certified carpenter build the scaffold under his direction, and then when we had to weld the brackets, I would take over and they would help me hold the brackets while I welded the brackets as a certified welder, and then when they placed the scaffold into position, they had a certified rigger and we would assist him.

That was done to improve the efficiencies of the companies, and they've done that all over Ontario. Mind

you, it wasn't too popular at the time because the construction trades stuck to their own trade. An electrician was an electrician, a welder was a welder and an ironworker was an ironworker, and they did not dare cross paths or there would be a major war. They are still like that today. A boilermaker is a boilermaker, and an ironworker is different. If a boilermaker does the ironworker's job, they have a work stoppage and a big fight about what the limits of their trade are.

Here's the government saying, "We want to go back to individual trades." That's fine in the construction industry, but what are you going to do with the multi-crafter who has been certified by the Ministry of Colleges and Universities to do these other disciplines? Are they going to cut his wages now because when he goes to work in construction, he doesn't qualify under their certification program because he only did certain disciplines to become a multi-crafter? Where is he going to be? I don't see any mention of that in here.

I'll tell you right now: There will be a lot of angry people in Ontario if a guy who has been in a trade for 30 years doing several disciplines goes out in construction and they say, "Sorry, you don't meet our criteria in that particular trade. You need it in your original trade, but the other three trades you've been doing for the last 30 years, you don't meet it," and he probably forgot more than the apprentice who's doing it and maybe some of the journeymen who are doing it. That's a question that has not been addressed by this government.

The key message from the NDP: We support an arm's-length body to streamline approvals of industry recommendations. Why I say that is because I can think back to the 1960s and 1970s, when a building in Hamilton was being built by non-union, uncertified people called Century 21. Well, 25 years later, there were electrical problems, drywall problems and plumbing problems. That building cost a fortune when it was built and it was 10 times as much to fix because they hadn't done it right the first time.

So, yes, I believe in certification for all trades in their particular discipline. I believe that these people—now, Mr. Ouellette from Oshawa made a very good point: "What does the guy do who's in his own house?" I don't think he's going to have to worry either because I do my own repairs and drywall and everything myself, too, so I don't think they're going to touch the little guy. If he was going to put in an electrical panel and he's not a certified electrician, I'd have a problem with that because I'd want an inspector to come in and look at that, like they do now, but he'd have to be certified to put that electrical panel in. If he's going to run the wires under the direction of an electrician as a helper and the electrician did the fine points at the end, that might be acceptable because—

Interjection.

Mr. Paul Miller: He can work as your apprentice electrician, obviously. He can run wires and then the electrician does the final on the panel. He's certified for that. The apprentice can run the wires. That's not a problem.

Anyway, there are certain things that they're not looking at in detail because maybe they didn't talk to all the trades. A lot of the small business people who aren't certified are going to have a problem with this. They're going to say, "Now I've got to go back to school. I'm 45 or 50 years old. I've been running a little business on the side here as a plumber—whatever I've been doing on the side—and I'm not certified, but I am capable. But now I have to get certified because I've been running my company, starting now, illegally because I'm not certified." Maybe it will protect him; maybe that's good. Maybe it'll protect the consumer; that's good. I agree with that. It may cause some aggravation for the small company that hasn't got all these certified people, and it will cost them more to get a certified guy to go out and do these things, because he's going to command top buck.

The member from my party, Mr. Rosario Marchese, was talking about streamlining. I really think that streamlining was true in those days, but I'll tell you, right now there are a lot of young people out there who would love to be streamlined, because the trades have caught up to the professions. They're becoming like gold. You get a certified tradesman, I know for a fact—in Calgary, my sister did an addition to her house and renovations, and she had to wait three months to get it done. It should have taken maybe a month at the most, and she did not dare complain. If you dared to complain, he or she wouldn't come back to complete it because they're in such demand. So it ended up being five months before she got what she should have had done in one month, but she didn't complain because she was lucky to get a tradesperson there. So the trades are definitely catching up. If I am ever no longer here, I think I would be able to get a job like that, no problem, in a trade. So that's good.

However, it's not clear that the new structure will be truly industry-driven, or whether the new college will be a cumbersome structure which merely substitutes one barrier—one bureaucratic barrier for the other. I'm having trouble today. I should have some water.

It is also not clear what the province's apprentices and journeypersons will get from the membership fee they're paying to the college. I know for a fact that there are a lot of memberships—the teachers, for instance. They complain about the teachers' college, about having to pay fees, and sometimes they make decisions that these teachers feel they're fully qualified to do and the college decides, "Well no, we're going to go this route," when some of them haven't agreed to it.

I guess one of the key issues of this whole bill is the completion rates. Other than the still rather limited number of mandatory certified trades, the single biggest concern remains that the increasing number of registered apprentices will not meet the demand for skilled workers unless apprentices complete their programs and acquire the training and skills needed by the labour market. In 2005, a study by the Centre for the Study of Living Standards reported that apprentices' registrations had increased substantially over the past 25 years, but the

number of apprentices completing their programs had not grown proportionately; in fact, it had declined. That's a pretty scary insight, that it actually had declined. So you can get a lot of people signing up for the program, but if they don't finish the program, then what good is it?

The centre reported that the completion rate across Canada in 2005 was 39%, down from 63% in 1982. It has also reported that Ontario's 32% completion rate was the third lowest among the 10 provinces. In comparison, Manitoba's completion rate, the highest among the provinces, was 61%.

I must tell you, I think we as a society are guilty of leading our kids toward where everyone had to be a computer expert, a doctor or a lawyer. But then it got to a point where there were too many doctors and lawyers and nobody was working with their hands anymore. I know for a fact that in the company I was in, I had three apprentices in 30 years because kids were moving away from that. They didn't want to work hard. They didn't want to do physical jobs. They wanted to stay in front of a computer. That's our fault as parents. That's where it all started.

I'll tell you, there are high schools in my city that were trade schools that have been shut down. There are no shop teachers. These are the guys who taught you the basics so you could go into the trades, and going into the trades by no means—I disagree. You may think that maybe the person wasn't intelligent and couldn't go to college. That's a lot of baloney. Frankly, a lot of those kids are sharp. Some of them have three and four trades, as Mr. Ouellette pointed out. These trades have become very valuable. You're almost like a dentist now: "Dr. Miller, could you perform a welding thing for us? We'll pay you \$35 an hour to come and do it." That's because we're short apprentices in this country. So I encourage young people in this province to move toward trades. It's a good-paying, solid job and frankly, you'll never be out of work unless there's a major, major downplay in this whole economy. And if you can't get a job in Ontario, you certainly can get one out in Alberta, because most of our people who were trained here ended up in the tar sands. You can train all the people you want, but if they don't have jobs—we need manufacturing jobs back in this province so that our apprentices, tradespeople and journeymen have a place to go to practise their skills.

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"While it is important to track the completion rates, it is just as important to determine why apprentices fail to complete their training program and at what stage in their training they drop out. However, the last ministry survey of apprentices and journeypersons to determine why they had left the apprentice program before completing it was in 1997." That was the last time they checked—1997. "The three most common reasons given were limited employment opportunities"—that's no surprise; look at our economy—"or employment instability"—take a look around—and "dislike of the work." That's our fault as parents. It got a little dirty, a little heavy, they didn't like it; they'd rather sit in front of a computer. Not all kids are

like that, but a good portion of them are. "I don't want to do that. That's too hard. I don't want to work in a steel plant. That's dirty. It's pollution. I don't want to do that." Well, you might have to because there aren't a lot of jobs out there.

"In 2005, the minister's action table on apprenticeship was formed to bring together various stakeholders from across the apprenticeship system. The committee suggested several strategies for improving completion rates, including ensuring that in-school training is relevant, current and of appropriate duration." A lot of these courses you go to as a tradesperson are really long. They could probably teach it to you two weeks before that. You write a test. You go on a field trip. You do all these things. There are some things that could be cut out to expedite the process so that you would be a qualified, good tradesperson out there. You don't want to rush the situation, but you definitely want to get out in a reasonable amount of time. If a kid looks at it and says, "Look, I can go to university for four years or I can do an apprenticeship for four or six years, because I can only work half-time"—it's like a co-op program; you work a little, you go to school a little. If you can't get it, then it ends up being a six-year ordeal and you're probably better off going to university.

"Ensuring that examinations are appropriate": In other words, don't be using 1940 technology in the classroom to explain—so when the kid goes to that panel or he goes to that house he says, "Well, they showed me something, but this doesn't even look like it. This is something that I have never seen before." So now the journeyman who's on the job has to take time out from his job to explain to him, "This is the new process, and this is the way it goes." We have to modernize and move with the times in our apprenticeships.

"Improving the tracking and monitoring of apprentices as they progress through their programs and providing supports such as counselling and extra training": Some people take longer to learn certain aspects of a trade, so maybe we should have people after hours who are going to bring them up to the level of the other classmates so that they can graduate at the same time.

"Implementing a program to help employers be good trainers and to improve the connections between workplace and in-school training content: The ministry is not yet ... collecting the information that it needs to increase the effectiveness of the apprenticeship system" in this province, "who is attracted to particular trades; factors that contribute to successful completion of apprenticeship programs; how apprentices fare once they finish their training; and which trades have low completion rates, and why.

"On-the-job training: Effective monitoring of the quality of training provided by both employers and in-school training providers is critical to the program's success in meeting the demand for skilled labour. Timely and ongoing monitoring may also increase the likelihood that apprentices will complete their programs and obtain certification."

The Auditor General has noted that the ministry has not yet “developed a policy on monitoring either in-school or workplace training.” How are you going to run a program when you don’t know what the kids are doing, where they are, when they’ll be done and how many of them there are? “The ministry still has not developed policies to provide direction to the training of consultants, although consultants are required to monitor compliance with regulatory requirements.” The last thing we need is one more bunch of consultants. What we need is journeymen training the kids—that’s what we need. I don’t need any more consultants. This government has more consultants than they ever needed.

“In 2005, the ministry reported that it was moving to improve the quality of apprenticeship training programs and accountability for apprenticeship training. Ministry training consultants were to monitor each training agreement between an employer and an apprentice to ensure that training provided on the job meets the industry standards set for each trade.” That’s not so bad. I like that part. “Field offices were to focus on registration, consulting and counselling apprentices toward accreditation, and scheduling and monitoring on-the-job training. The ministry also intended to measure client satisfaction with training consultants.” That didn’t happen. Good thoughts put on paper—didn’t happen.

“However, training consultants at the field offices we visited were concerned about their inability to conduct more than a few, if any, monitoring visits to employers and in-class training providers to determine compliance with the training contracts and service agreements. All training consultants we interviewed stated that their overwhelming priority was meeting the apprenticeship registration targets”—well, that says it all. All they were worried about was meeting their registration targets so they could look good to the public; not about how the kid was doing, where he was in the course or what the result was going to be—“and that there is too much emphasis on quantity and not quality”—not quality, but the number of people they can sign up for the programs.

“Consultants were also concerned that increasing caseloads eliminated any time to work with existing apprentices or employers. Given that the number of training consultants has remained at 100 since our last audit while registration has risen, client caseloads have nearly doubled over the last few years and averaged about 900 to 1,000 apprentices per consultant.” How could one consultant possibly monitor 1,000 apprentices? Impossible. “Consequently, it was largely up to the apprentices to complete their in-school training and contact their assigned consultant if they are having difficulties.” The guy who’s representing 1,000 apprentices is going to have time for me to phone up and talk about my personal stuff? I don’t think so.

“Many training consultants stated that they need ongoing communication with apprentices to motivate them to complete their programs, and that apprentices often complain of the long interval between visits. Reduced time for monitoring or contact with apprentices may be one reason for low completion rates.

“The training consultants also stated that providing poor service to employers is detrimental to the program, especially in the non-restricted trades, as a result of the lower completion rates in these trades than in the restricted trades. With the reduced employer visits, the apprentices are now solely responsible to get the required training for completion of their training standard.” Can you imagine that? They want a 21-year-old kid to take all this responsibility to get his own training. He shouldn’t have to worry about that. He should be concentrating on what he has to learn to become a good journeyman, not on all this bureaucratic red tape. “Field staff believe that more frequent and more focused monitoring will also allow them to increase registrations by visiting more work sites and more potential apprentices.” Well, let’s get the ones we’ve got there trained properly first before we worry about filling our quota. It’s not like you’re giving out tickets and you’ve got to fill the quota.

“With little monitoring of employers, it is difficult to assess the quality of the training being received by apprentices. Training consultants commented that apprentices registered in trades under the Apprenticeship and Certification Act, 1998 are required to complete the training standard, but the onus is on the employer to ensure that apprentices are able to complete all the training requirements.” Well, the employer should take an interest in his apprentices. That kid is going to be working for him for the next 35 years, hopefully; he should take the onus. “Apprentices generally do not attempt the trade examination until they have received employer approval on all the requirements in the training standard, because a significant amount of content tested in the examination is based on these requirements.” That makes sense. If you’re not trained and you aren’t proficient in the requirements for the testing, obviously you’re not going to take it, but that could delay your graduation.

“In-school training and support for exams: The ministry funds 65 training providers (24 colleges and 41 union- or employer-sponsored training centres) to deliver the in-school portion of the apprenticeship program. The ministry’s training consultants are required to monitor the quality of classroom training relative to industry standards for each trade.

“Although the training consultants review the results of individual apprentices on their client lists and may know anecdotally if there are any problems with a particular program or provider, the ministry does not review the in-school pass rates by program and by training provider. Such a review may identify differences worthy of investigation either as potential problems or best practices.”

I could go on, but it doesn’t look like too many people are paying attention. They’re busy laughing and talking. As usual, in the House, they’re distracted by other things. Speaking from a trades perspective, I had over 30 years in the trades, and I think I could bring a little to the table, but obviously nobody wants to listen, so that’s fine. We’ll continue in the pattern we’re going. I hope that all these people who don’t listen can really talk about trades, because I don’t think they can.

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The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Reza Moridi: Thanks to the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek for his remarks. The member, in his remarks, mentioned a story in Hamilton where a building was built by uncertified people, and after some years, problems came up and then the people noticed the defects and the problems. He is quite right: That's why we need discipline in our apprenticeship programs, and that's why we have brought up this notion of the college of trades, because our apprentices need to be certified, they need to receive the best quality of education and training so that they can go out and perform their jobs in the best way, in the interests of the consumer, in the interests of our economy and in the interests of our province.

This bill which is before the House, once it is passed, is going to open the path for foreign-trained individuals, people who have certification and licensing from other countries when they immigrate to Canada. Now they don't have the opportunity to get into the system. There will be a lot of assistance to those people, who will be integrated in our economy and in our workforce.

Apart from the college of trades, the government of Ontario is going to keep some of the responsibilities in its own hands, and I'm just going to mention a few of those responsibilities which the government is going to keep. For example, apprenticeship registration will remain within the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities. Employer contacts, management of school scheduling and the management of apprenticeship programs such as Ontario youth apprenticeship, pre-apprenticeship, the co-op diploma, the apprenticeship tax credit—these are the programs which the government is going to keep in its own hands.

This bill, once it's passed, is going to modernize the apprenticeship programs in our province, and that's what we need in this province.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member from Oshawa.

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: I listened to and want to comment on the member's comments. There's a couple of things, though. The member spoke about the newest trades, but it's important to have some of those old skills as well. I recall that in another house we had, we had a water boiler, and they sent an apprentice over to fix it. It was a water-heated house. I started asking questions. He'd say, "Excuse me. I've got the answer out in the truck," and go out to the truck. I looked around and there he was, phoning and talking to a journeyman.

Finally, an hour, hour and a half later, the journeyman finally came down, and I said, "What's the problem? It's leaking here." He said, "The problem is, that valve is faulty." So I ended up bringing somebody in, changing the valve, and guess what? The journeyman didn't know how to use the technology. It was an expansion tank that was full and the valve was working like it should have.

The point is that we have to make sure that some of the old technologies are still being utilized.

But some of the questions I have for the PA are very effective in that we need some answers on that. For example, I know individuals who work in particular trades, such as automotive trades, who have tried a number of times to pass their final exams, have not passed and are remaining apprentices. How can they remain apprentices? Because that's all they intend to do. They never intend to take the test again. Will this allow them to continue on as an apprentice for the rest of their career working in that field? That's one of the questions I hope they would be able to ask at a later date.

Not only that, but some of the other aspects—I recall when I was, quite a few years ago, still in my early teens. We were building a new house and there was a brick-and-block person. I was mixing mortar and I was carrying blocks. Does that mean that I can't mix mortar and carry blocks, helping out on a site as well, because I don't fall into these classifications?

Lastly, effectively there are a lot of new trades that may be falling into place here. Can the PA actually tell me: What is the qualification to build a log home?

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Member from Trinity–Spadina.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I congratulate my colleague from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek for reinforcing some of the issues that the Auditor General put in his report; that is, the ministry increased apprenticeship opportunities and registration but was less successful in ensuring that apprentices complete the training; that staff say that too much emphasis is on registration over certification; that there's a lack of strategies to increase registration in high-demand skilled trades—and the lack of coordination in safety enforcement efforts. These things are important to emphasize. So when I hear the member from Richmond Hill talk about modernizing our apprenticeship program, I almost worry because I think, "What is it that they're modernizing? What didn't they do that the college is going to do, and is there something positive about modernizing that the government was not able to do in their structure?" So I'm concerned a little bit.

I also worry when he says that the government is keeping registration. I'm worried that they're keeping registration. I say to myself, "What are they going to do about completion rates?"

I'm worried that they're keeping the youth apprenticeship programs and the co-op program, because I'm not sure how effective it has been in terms of what the government has done and what it should do. I pointed out earlier that the co-op program depends on students having a contact with an employer, and if they don't have a contact with some employer, that's usually a family member, what do they do? The contact is with a family member, meaning it limits the available contacts they have with employers.

So the member from Richmond Hill says that we're keeping these kind of things, and I'm saying to myself, "If it didn't work while they've had it in their hands, how

is it going to work while they keep it for the future?" I'm profoundly worried.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Reza Moridi: I thank the members from Oshawa and also Trinity-Spadina for their comments—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Excuse me; sorry. The member from Richmond Hill has already made comments.

Questions and comments?

Mr. Mike Colle: It is a valuable discussion that we've had this afternoon, I think, because in this very high-tech cyber-world, we forget the fact that we have the imperative of having skilled tradespeople. Sometimes in our rush into the cyber-world we don't stop and ensure that we've got highly trained, highly skilled tradespeople. As you know, the tragedy is—I know, for instance, that in the construction trades in Toronto for the last 25 or 30 years there has been a shortage of skilled tradespeople. Subsequently, they've had to go begging for workers from outside of Canada, from eastern Europe, from Portugal, to come and work in our construction trades here in Ontario. Construction, certainly in the GTA, is one of the most important wealth-producing industries, yet there aren't enough young people going into the skilled trades.

I know some of the unions, Local 183, the Carpenters' Union, Local 27, have tried these training centres to attract young people, but frankly it has been very difficult, because I think what they see on television and in the media very rarely has tradespeople as role models; it's always somebody running around in an Escalade singing rap songs or something. Meanwhile, they don't show the electricians, the plumbers, the tool and die people, the cement mixers, the cement finishers, who are critically important. These are critically important trades, and I think they should be role models for those students, like the pages we have here. I hope some of the pages will one day take up a trade. I think you've got a great future in that area. There's a great demand for skilled tradespeople.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member from Hamilton East-Stoney Creek has up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. Paul Miller: I guess overall the government is moving in the right direction as far as forming a college for trades. I like that. I like the fact that we're going to have certified people. I think this should be equal across the province, across the country, so that tradespeople can leave Ontario and go to work somewhere else and feel very confident that their training is going to be sufficient in those other provinces, and I think that's good, too.

It's going to be hard for the small business man to compete and to be able to afford—because his rates, obviously, are going to go up when he goes on a construction site or to do renovations and things, because he's going to have to be certified. But from a safety perspective, I don't think that's such a bad thing. Sometimes the backyard mechanics, I guess you'd call them, have done jobs that have been questionable at best, and you go in and an inspector almost has a heart attack looking at the workmanship. It could be a hazard; it could be a fire; it could be a flood. There are a lot of things that can happen if the jobs aren't done properly, and there are certain ways things need to be done and certain standards that have to be met as a tradesperson to give the consumer a feeling that he's had a job done well and it will be safe. I think that's what this may provide. This college will be an overseeing body that will make sure that the tradespeople in our province are the best, and the best in the world, and the consumer can feel safe, when a truck pulls up in front of his home, that he's going to get the best bang for his dollar and a safe job.

I think it's the right thing to do. There will be some resistance at first from the smaller people who feel that they are certified, but in the eyes of the government they're not and they should be.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

Mr. Mike Colle: On a point of order, Madam Speaker: I mentioned that you shouldn't have an Escalade. I'd just mention that one of the pages here said that her family has an Escalade, and she doesn't like rap music; she likes ballads.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): That's not a point of order, but thanks anyway.

We are just about at 6 o'clock. This House stands adjourned until tomorrow morning at 9 o'clock.

The House adjourned at 1801.

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Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hoy, Pat (LIB)	Chatham–Kent–Essex	
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara- Ouest–Glanbrook	
Jaczek, Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham	
Jeffrey, Linda (LIB)	Brampton–Springdale	
Johnson, Rick (LIB)	Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock	
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin–Caledon	
Klees, Frank (PC)	Newmarket–Aurora	
Kormos, Peter (NDP)	Welland	Third Party House Leader / Leader parlementaire de parti reconnu
Kular, Kuldip (LIB)	Bramalea–Gore–Malton	
Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Lalonde, Jean-Marc (LIB)	Glengarry–Prescott–Russell	
Leal, Jeff (LIB)	Peterborough	
Levac, Dave (LIB)	Brant	
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean–Carleton	
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	
Marchese, Rosario (NDP)	Trinity–Spadina	
Martiniuk, Gerry (PC)	Cambridge	
Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	London North Centre / London- Centre-Nord	Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Mauro, Bill (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	
McGuinty, Hon. / L'hon. Dalton (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	Minister of Economic Development / Ministre du Développement économique Premier / Premier ministre Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
McMeekin, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (LIB)	Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough– Westdale	Minister of Government Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux
McNeely, Phil (LIB)	Ottawa–Orléans	
Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa–Vanier	Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound–Muskoka	
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	
Milloy, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Mitchell, Carol (LIB)	Huron–Bruce	
Moridi, Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	
Munro, Julia (PC)	York–Simcoe	
Murdoch, Bill (PC)	Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound	
Naqvi, Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	
O'Toole, John (PC)	Durham	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Oraziotti, David (LIB)	Sault Ste. Marie	
Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Oshawa	
Pendergast, Leeanna (LIB)	Kitchener–Conestoga	
Peters, Hon. / L'hon. Steve (LIB)	Elgin–Middlesex–London	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
Phillips, Hon. / L'hon. Gerry (LIB)	Scarborough–Agincourt	Chair of Cabinet / Président du Conseil des ministres Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Prue, Michael (NDP)	Beaches–East York	
Pupatello, Hon. / L'hon. Sandra (LIB)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	Minister of International Trade and Investment / Ministre du Commerce international et de l'Investissement
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Ramal, Khalil (LIB)	London–Fanshawe	
Ramsay, David (LIB)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	
Rinaldi, Lou (LIB)	Northumberland–Quinte West	
Runciman, Robert W. (PC)	Leeds–Grenville	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle
Ruprecht, Tony (LIB)	Davenport	
Sandals, Liz (LIB)	Guelph	
Savoline, Joyce (PC)	Burlington	
Sergio, Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	
Shurman, Peter (PC)	Thornhill	
Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Monique M. (LIB)	Nipissing	Minister of Tourism / Ministre du Tourisme Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement Deputy Premier / Vice-premier ministre
Smitherman, Hon. / L'hon. George (LIB)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	Minister of Energy and Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Énergie et de l'Infrastructure
Sorbara, Greg (LIB)	Vaughan	
Sousa, Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	
Sterling, Norman W. (PC)	Carleton–Mississippi Mills	
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto–Danforth	Deputy Third Party House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de parti reconnu
Takhar, Hon. / L'hon. Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga–Erindale	Minister of Small Business and Consumer Services / Ministre des Petites Entreprises et des Services aux consommateurs
Van Bommel, Maria (LIB)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	
Watson, Hon. / L'hon. Jim (LIB)	Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Wilkinson, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Perth–Wellington	Minister of Research and Innovation / Ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe–Grey	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Witmer, Elizabeth (PC)	Kitchener–Waterloo	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke	
Zimmer, David (LIB)	Willowdale	

**STANDING AND SELECT COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
COMITÉS PERMANENTS ET SPÉCIAUX DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE**

Standing Committee on Estimates / Comité permanent des budgets des dépenses

Chair / Président: Tim Hudak
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Garfield Dunlop
Gilles Bisson, Bob Delaney
Garfield Dunlop, Kevin Daniel Flynn
Tim Hudak, Amrit Mangat
Phil McNeely, Yasir Naqvi
John O'Toole
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przewdziecki

**Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs /
Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques**

Chair / Président: Pat Hoy
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Jean-Marc Lalonde
Sophia Aggelonitis, Ted Arnott
Wayne Arthurs, Toby Barrett
Pat Hoy, Jean-Marc Lalonde
Leeanna Pendergast, Michael Prue
Charles Sousa
Committee Clerk / Greffier: William Short

**Standing Committee on General Government / Comité
permanent des affaires gouvernementales**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Jim Brownell
Robert Bailey, Jim Brownell
Linda Jeffrey, Kuldip Kular
Rosario Marchese, Bill Mauro
Carol Mitchell, David Orazietti
Joyce Savoline
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

**Standing Committee on Government Agencies / Comité
permanent des organismes gouvernementaux**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Lisa MacLeod
Michael A. Brown, Howard Hampton
Rick Johnson, Lisa MacLeod
Gerry Martiniuk, Julia Munro
David Ramsay, Lou Rinaldi
Liz Sandals
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Douglas Arnott

**Standing Committee on Justice Policy / Comité permanent de
la justice**

Chair / Président: Lorenzo Berardinetti
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Jeff Leal
Lorenzo Berardinetti, Christine Elliott
Peter Kormos, Jeff Leal
Dave Levac, Reza Moridi
Lou Rinaldi, John Yakubuski
David Zimmer
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Susan Sourial

**Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly / Comité
permanent de l'Assemblée législative**

Chair / Président: Bas Balkissoon
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Kevin Daniel Flynn
Laura Albanese, Bas Balkissoon
Bob Delaney, Joe Dickson
Kevin Daniel Flynn, Sylvia Jones
Norm Miller, Mario Sergio
Peter Tabuns
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Tonia Grannum

**Standing Committee on Public Accounts / Comité permanent
des comptes publics**

Chair / Président: Norman W. Sterling
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Jerry J. Ouellette
Laura Albanese, France Gélinas
Ernie Hardeman, Phil McNeely
Jerry J. Ouellette, Liz Sandals
Norman W. Sterling, Maria Van Bommel
David Zimmer
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

**Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Comité
permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé**

Chair / Président: Michael Prue
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Paul Miller
Bas Balkissoon, Mike Colle
Rick Johnson, Gerry Martiniuk
Paul Miller, Bill Murdoch
Michael Prue, Tony Ruprecht
Mario Sergio
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przewdziecki

**Standing Committee on Social Policy / Comité permanent de
la politique sociale**

Chair / Président: Shafiq Qadri
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Vic Dhillon
Laurel C. Broten, Kim Craitor
Vic Dhillon, Cheri DiNovo
Helena Jaczek, Shafiq Qadri
Khalil Ramal, Peter Shurman
Elizabeth Witmer
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

Select Committee on Elections / Comité spécial des élections

Chair / Président: Greg Sorbara
Howard Hampton, Greg Sorbara
Norman W. Sterling, David Zimmer
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

**Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions / Comité
spécial de la santé mentale et des dépendances**

Chair / Président: Kevin Daniel Flynn
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Christine Elliott
Bas Balkissoon, Christine Elliott
Kevin Daniel Flynn, France Gélinas
Helena Jaczek, Sylvia Jones
Jeff Leal, Liz Sandals
Maria Van Bommel
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Susan Sourial

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